

CONNECTICUT PY 2020-2023

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I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a unified plan

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Connecticut has opted to submit a Unified State Plan encompassing the six core programs covered by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In addition to the six aforementioned core programs, the Connecticut Unified State Plan also includes reference to the linkages for various Federal and State funded education and training, workforce development grants and programs.

Becoming a Leader in Effective Workforce Development

Governor Lamont has stated his goal to ensure our CT workforce system is designed to meet the needs of 20th the 21st century. Toward that end, the Governor signed Executive Order No. 4 on October 29, 2019, which directs the creation of the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) – formerly known as the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission. This body is responsible for partnering with the business community and knocking down barriers amongst state government agencies so that Connecticut can have the most aligned, high-quality, and equitable workforce development system in the country. The Council includes top executives from key industries as well as leaders of nonprofits, unions, the legislature, and educational institutions.

The Council is emblematic of our administration's approach of bringing the public and private sectors together to drive our state's economic growth. Strategic goals of the Council include:

- strengthening the bridge from secondary to post-secondary education;
- reducing barriers to training; and
- measuring data-informed outcomes.

The first meeting of the GWC was held on November 21, 2019 and included a review of the Council's role, functions and structure. Six committees have been formed to address the state's primary industry clusters, data performance and planning, education and training, and supportive services. Council meetings will be held quarterly. The Council Chair has conducted a listening tour of businesses, universities and educational institutions, State and local leaders, philanthropic organizations, and Workforce Development Boards. A strategic plan will be submitted to the CT Legislature and Governor in October, 2020.

The Council and its chair will take a lead role in advising the Governor on the state's workforce development strategy and supporting the state's economic growth. It will also coordinate among stakeholders in the workforce system, including businesses, state agencies, quasi-public and independent entities, boards, councils, and commissions, public and private education and training institutions, workforce development boards, nonprofit institutions and labor unions.

Economic Development

Key components of Governor Lamont's vision to transform the state's economic development strategy include aggressive business recruitment, collaborative work across agencies to better support existing businesses and onboard new ones, as well as a strategic and long-term economic policy focus, including in the important area of opportunity zones. To execute on this vision, Governor Lamont appointed David Lehman, a partner with Goldman Sachs, to serve in dual roles as the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and as the Governor's Senior Economic Advisor.

In addition, Governor Lamont announced that two of Connecticut's principal economic development entities – the nonprofit Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) and DECD – will form an innovative public-private partnership known as the Partnership to Advance the Connecticut of Tomorrow (PACT). Through this collaboration, CERC will function as the outward-facing recruitment arm on behalf of the state, and DECD will continue to support, promote, and advocate for existing businesses while also serving as the central resource to help new businesses navigate state and local government to minimize lag time,

enhance services, and expedite relocation. As part of his mandate, Commissioner Lehman will ensure tight alignment between CERC and DECD.

In recognition of the vital role manufacturing plays in the state's economy, the Governor has appointed a chief manufacturing officer to oversee efforts to grow the state's manufacturing sector. This new position will operate under the umbrella of the DECD and will seek better coordination over multiple agencies, assuring that training and education is available to meet job demands, maintaining supply chains, providing a regulatory process that protects safety and the environment but is not redundant or unnecessarily burdensome, and establishing Connecticut as welcoming to such industries are all vital components for growth.

Opportunity zones are another facet of the Governor's vision for economic development. The federal Opportunity Zones program was designed to incent public and private stakeholders to work together to rebuild American cities. Eligible investors who make qualified investments within those zones may be eligible for significant capital gains tax benefits. Seventy-two urban and suburban areas across Connecticut have been federally designated as Opportunity Zones. Connecticut's state government and its 27 municipalities with designated Opportunity Zones are eager to leverage this program to encourage investments in Connecticut.

CT innovation hubs continue to grow in the state, including incubators, accelerators, co-working spaces and maker spaces of all types. These include:

- The Borough496 incubator in Hamden, CT will offer below-market rent, mentoring and other services to entrepreneurs. It's also an example of adaptive reuse of old buildings – in this case, the long-shuttered Newhall School.
- In Fairfield, CT Sacred Heart University's new iHub, a partnership with Verizon, offers entrepreneurs access to university students, staff and services.

Digital Health CT, an accelerator for digital health and medical technology startups opened in 2019 in Hartford. It's a partnership of Hartford HealthCare, Trinity College and UConn.

State Budget Impacts

The State is investing in Connecticut's future by positioning the state as a leader in effective workforce development efforts. This begins with supporting towns in their effort to provide every student with a high-quality K-12 education that lays the foundation for a lifetime of success, continues as students move through our excellent state college and university system, and culminates in our agencies' collaborative approach to scaling the programs that have proven most successful in preparing the people of Connecticut with the skills they need and our businesses need to thrive in a 21st-century economy.

Apprenticeship pipelines have proven to be an excellent way to develop skills for good-paying careers in manufacturing and other industries. Fifteen million dollars has been authorized through the state bond commission to support the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative and the development of workforce pipeline programs for entry-level workers in manufacturing and other industry sectors in the state that are experiencing sustained workforce shortages. The initiative includes outreach to underserved populations and youth. Thus far, two of the state's workforce development boards were awarded a combined \$4.7 million to train workers for manufacturing jobs through this funding. The Workforce Alliance Manufacturing Careers Partnership will receive \$3.45 million to connect qualified candidates to unfilled employment opportunities in central Connecticut and shoreline areas through its Skill Up for Manufacturing program. The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board Manufacturing Industry Partnership will receive \$1.25 million to address the shortage of skilled workers throughout the northwest workforce region (which includes Waterbury, Torrington and Danbury).

Strategic Initiatives

In 2019, the Partnership for Connecticut was launched to strengthen public education and promote greater economic opportunity in Connecticut. The Partnership aims to achieve three goals through the public outreach process: identify communities and organizations currently helping children and young adults graduate high school and get jobs; discover areas in which these communities and organizations need more resources

to advance their goals; and identify proven and promising programs that could have a positive impact.

Through Connecticut's leadership and the support of the Dalio Philanthropies, the Partnership seeks to raise \$300 million over five years: \$100 million from the State of Connecticut that will be matched by \$100 million from Dalio Philanthropies and another \$100 million from other philanthropists and business leaders. The partnership plans to invest this funding over the next five years in programs to help disadvantaged youth who have become disengaged or dropped out of school.

In addition, Connecticut has been awarded a \$27 million federal grant to help create more community-based early childhood development programs. The state's Office of Early Childhood will be tasked with recruiting a culturally, racially and linguistically diverse early childhood workforce that is fairly compensated. The grant funding will help retain early childhood development workers, especially in low income neighborhoods. The funds will also be used to develop programs that would give parents a voice in early childhood programs in all communities.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

Connecticut's economy has been growing slowly since the end of the great recession. As of September 2019 Connecticut has now recovered 85% of the jobs lost from March 2008 to January 2010 one of the few states in the nation where employment remains below its pre-recession level. Nevertheless, employment remains on an upward track with total employment up 8,800 (0.5%) from one year ago and private sector employment up 10,500 (0.7%) September 2018 to September 2019.

The industries with the largest increases in demand are health care, professional scientific and technical services, social assistance and manufacturing. Demand in the health care industry overall is driven by the aging population. Restructuring within the industry is moving care away from the large institutions (hospitals and nursing are facilities) to ambulatory care. The largest projected increases through 2026 are in home health care services, offices of physicians, and outpatient care centers. Within professional scientific and technical services, computer system design, management consulting, and architectural & engineering will be adding the most jobs although every industry in this sector is projected to grow. Within social assistance, individual & family services will add the most jobs. Within manufacturing, the largest increases will be in transportation equipment manufacturing which includes aerospace and shipbuilding followed by fabricated metal product manufacturing but several other manufacturing industries are also projected to gain. During the two-year period 2016Q2 to 2018Q2, Connecticut's overall employment grew by 6,350 jobs, or 0.4%. The private sector increased 12,537 (0.9%), while the government sector declined 6,187 (-2.6%).

The three sectors with the largest two-year gains were Manufacturing, Other Services, and Transportation and Warehousing, which increased by 4,305, 4,095, and 3,568 jobs, respectively, from 2016 to 2018 shown in the figure below. The gains in Manufacturing and Transportation and Warehousing represent recent shifts in the Connecticut economy.

Transportation and Warehousing growth is due primarily to the increased number of internet retailer warehousing distribution centers in the state, which began adding Connecticut locations in late 2015.

Increased on-line shopping has driven employment growth in Transportation and Warehousing and to declines in Retail Trade, which was down 3,691 in the two years preceding the 2018Q2 projection base. Despite these declines, Retail Trade remains one of the largest sectors – it averaged 180,000 jobs in 2018Q2. Finance and Insurance employment fell by 4,294 jobs during the two years ending 2018Q2, as banks and investment firms contracted. The insurance industry added nearly 800 jobs in this period.

Most of the decline in Government employment was at the state level. Education and Health each declined about 1,000 jobs, while Public Administration fell by over 2,000. Local Government also contracted. Other industries of note include Accommodations and Food Services, which continues to add jobs at a faster rate than the overall economy and Construction which was down over 1,000 jobs from 2016Q2 to 2018Q2, mostly due to a sluggish second quarter last year but which has since added jobs. As of March 2019 construction was up 2,500 jobs from the previous year.

Health Care and Social Assistance, the largest combined sector of the economy, continues to add jobs overall, driven by strong gains in Ambulatory Health Care and Social Assistance, up 4.9% and 3.8%, respectively, in the two years ending 2018Q2. These gains were tempered by losses in other components of the sector with Hospitals, down 1.5%, and Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, down 3.2%. Those two industries had respective employment peaks in 2012 and 2014.

Connecticut manufacturing continues to maintain strong employment growth that began in the first quarter of 2016. This growth is unique to the region. Our 2.8% growth during the two years that precede the short term projection period (2016Q2-2018Q2) compares favorably to the neighboring states of Massachusetts and New York, which were down 0.7% and 1.5%.

Connecticut's two-year Manufacturing growth outpaces the national average of 2.6% and is driven by strong gains in transportation equipment manufacturing. Announcements from major employers suggest that growth in this sector will continue for the foreseeable future.

Transportation equipment is Connecticut's largest manufacturing industry, which includes both aerospace and shipbuilding and encompasses about 28 percent of manufacturing employment in the state.

Over the past two years, overall manufacturing growth was heavily concentrated in transportation equipment, accelerating a multi-year trend. In total, 11 out of 19 3-digit NIACS manufacturing industries added a combined 5,867 jobs over these growing sectors. Two year manufacturing declines occurred in 8 industries and amounted to losses of 1,790 jobs. The largest two year declines occurred in Computer and Electronic Products (-713) and Machinery Manufacturing (-498).

Aerospace products and parts manufacturing is a component industry of transportation equipment. In 2018, Connecticut's Aerospace employment was the fifth highest in the country. This sector employs 2.1 percent of total private Connecticut employment, which is the third highest share in the country after Washington (3.0%) and Kansas (2.8%). Shipbuilding represents about 28 percent of transportation equipment manufacturing employment, and has continued to consistently add jobs, though growth has slowed in recent quarters. Unlike other manufacturing areas, shipbuilding has shown very little cyclicity since 2000. This differs significantly from shipbuilding employment nationally, which peaked in 2007 at 161,952, lost 24.7% of its employment by early 2011 and was just over 86.4% of peak levels by the end of 2018.

The portion of the manufacturing workforce over age 54 continues to increase suggesting that the need to replace retiring workers will only grow in coming years. Over the past 10 years, the share of manufacturing workers over 54 has had one of the largest industry increases, up 11.0 percentage points to 35.4% in 2018. With more than a third of its workforce over age 54, manufacturing will need to hire many replacement workers in addition to filling the new jobs that are expected to be added in the short term.

Consistent with the aging population, employment in Connecticut's health care sector has continued to expand. However there are structural changes within the sector which has implications for the outlook. Ambulatory care settings, such as Offices of Physicians, Home Health Care Services, and Outpatient Care Centers have been adding jobs which residential facilities such as nursing homes have been contracting. While employment at general hospitals increased in 2017, it declined slightly in 2018. Outpatient Care Centers have experienced large growth in the short term. From 2016 to 2018 that industry grew by 22.2%. In the past ten years it has nearly doubled, up 84.9% from 6,318 in 2008 to 11,650 in 2018. As with other sectors in the economy, the portion of the Healthcare and Social assistance workforce aged 55 and over is

increasing. Since 2001 the sector has seen its over 54 workforce increase from 15.1% to 26.2% in 2018, levels slightly below the over 54 share for all industries.

The finance and Insurance sector of the economy has shed jobs during the past 10 years, down 19,259 jobs since 2008. Most of this decline occurred within the Insurance Carriers (-8,109 or 12.4%) and Credit Intermediation (-6,134 or 20.1%). This industry employs proportionally fewer younger and older workers than the overall economy.

Retail trade employment has been declining in recent years. Annual average declines began in 2015 down 0.1% from a year before. Prior to this period the industry seemed to track overall nonfarm employment change. From 2016-17 it fell 0.6% and accelerated its decline falling by 1.5% from 2017-18. As of May 2019, retail employment levels of 175,500 are just below the previous low of 176,400 reached in November 2008. The largest declines were seen in Grocery stores (-1.7%), Clothing stores (-4.7%), and Health & Personal Care stores (-4.3%), which all declined by over 580 jobs. Despite this challenging landscape for retail trade, Auto Parts, Accessories, and Tire Stores (+293 jobs, +6.3%), Building Material & Supplies dealers (+274 jobs, +2.1%), Furniture Stores (+128, +4.9%) and seven other detailed industries added jobs over the year. The overall trend for retail is the result of changes in consumer preferences derivative of online shopping and evident throughout the country. This reduced retail demand has increased demand for workers in the transportation and warehousing industry, which has been adding jobs since 2010.

A vast majority of job growth in Transportation and Warehousing has been driven by the Warehousing and Storage segment of the sector, which is up 1,729 jobs over the year. Other internet commerce-related industries such as Courier & Express Delivery Services (+647 jobs), and General Freight Trucking (+196 jobs) added jobs in continuance of multi-year trends. Taxi & Limousine Service and Other Ground Passenger Transportation were down a combined 204 jobs, which is likely impacted by the growing popularity of ridesharing services. The strong gains in Warehousing and Storage employment began in 2013 and have added 4,544 jobs through 2018, an overall increase of 55%. The 1,729 increase from 2017-18 alone is a 15.6% expansion, some of this increase may be attributed to the 2018 opening of a FedEx distribution center in Middletown which was noted to add between 500-1,000 jobs. Other media announcements indicate that additional warehouses and distribution centers are expected to open in coming years. Additional sources suggest that the nationwide shortage of truck drivers is contributing to warehousing expansion in Connecticut because that industry is shifting from long haul routes to shorter trips, and locations in the state can distribute to both New York and Boston.

The workforce age distribution of the Retail and Transportation & Warehousing industries differ in some ways from each other and from the overall Connecticut labor force. Retail has a much larger share of its workforce under age 25 than the overall economy, 25 and 12 percent respectively. As that sector declined, its under 25 workforce has fallen 18% over the past 10 years, from 53,737 to 43,899 in 2018. Its prime age workforce is down 3.2% while its over 54 workforce has increased over 10 years by 8,748 or 27.2% to 40,892 in 2018. Over the past ten years, Transportation and Warehousing grew 16.4%. By age cohort, 48.6% of that ten year growth occurred in the over 54 age cohort, 6.2% in the prime age cohort and 23% in the under 25 cohort. This differs significantly from the overall economy, which was down 0.9% overall with the over 54 cohort up 30.4% and the prime and under 25 cohorts down -8.3 and -12.1% respectively. From 2017 to 2018, the industry experience a large uptick in under age 25 employment, in 2017 they were 8.7% of the labor force but accounted for 25.5% of growth through 2018.

ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

Computer system design and related services is 27% of employment in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector but represented 42% of the projected growth in that sector. Occupations within this industry with the largest projected employment increase are Applications Software Developers, Computer and Information Systems Managers, Computer Systems Analysts, Systems Software Developers, and Customer Service Representatives. While not necessarily “emerging” as these occupations are long established, the restructuring of the

healthcare industry toward ambulatory and home care has increased demand for Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides. Combined employment in these two occupations is projected to grow by over 10,000 with over 80,000 total openings to fill the new positions and replace workers who either exit the labor force or transfer to different occupations.

Employers are seeking a wide range of knowledge, skills, credential, and licenses. In the large and growing health care sector, the largest demand is for Registered Nurses with a majority of job postings in this occupation currently seeking RNs with a Bachelor's Degree even though an RN license is obtainable with an Associate's Degree. Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides require less education and training. Within the growing manufacturing sector, hiring is occurring at every education level. The occupations showing the most growth with the Computer Systems Design and Related Services generally require a bachelor's degree.

A concern is finding enough qualified people to meet employer demand not only in manufacturing, but the state's other industry sectors as Connecticut will face a surge in retirements. Forty-eight percent of all jobs in the state are identified as middle-skill and the demand for middle-skill jobs is expected to remain strong. Connecticut's supply of high-skill and lower-skill workers exceeds demand, while the reverse is true for middle-skill workers. Overall labor market measures, such as a low unemployment rate and high employment to population ratio, suggest that demographics and slow population growth are the largest challenges Connecticut faces as it attempts to accelerate job growth.

Middle-skill jobs generally require some significant education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree including associate's degrees, vocational certificates, and on-the-job training (i.e., apprenticeships). Other qualities that are commonly lacking among recent hires or attempted hires are overall employability and technical skills. This includes deficits in advanced technical skills, math, writing, reading,

English proficiency and computer skills. With the low unemployment rate in the state, employers are having difficulty filling positions at all skill levels and as a result job openings are near a record high. The Conference Board's Help Wanted on Line index shows nearly 50,000 job postings in Connecticut with 25% requiring a high school diploma, vocational training, or an Associate's Degree and 32% requiring a Bachelor's degree or more.

The various entities, partners and stakeholders comprising Connecticut's extensive workforce development system have planned and implemented a broad array of innovative initiatives addressing Connecticut's workforce development priorities. They are described in detail in later sections of the plan.

Connecticut's unemployment rate peaked in November 2010 at 9.3 percent and has since fallen to 3.6 percent as of October, 2019. Connecticut's unemployment rate is at its lowest level since early 2002. Prior to 2011, Connecticut's unemployment rate was characteristically at or below national levels. From early 2011 through late 2018, Connecticut's unemployment rate remained persistently above US levels, with the largest spread being 0.7 percentage points in October 2014. During the first half of 2019, The US and Connecticut unemployment rates have converged.

Annual average labor force participation peaked in 2008 at 69 percent, a level not seen since the early 1990s. After reaching a low of 64.9 percent in 2013, it was 63.1% percent in 2018 after dropping from 66.6% in 2017. This drop corresponds with sharp declines in participation of the over 54 age cohort. That cohort is down 3.2 points since 2017 to 45.8%. That decline equates to an over age 54 drop of 22,000 since 2017 and mostly occurred in the age 55-64 segment of that group. The narrowing gap between labor force participation and employment to population ratios (EPR) corresponds with unemployment rate decreases in recent years. EPR peaked in 2007 at 65.7% a year before the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR). Since toughing in 2013, it has an average year-over-year percentage point increase of 0.6 percentage points through 2018. From 2017 to 2018 it was down 0.2 points.

State-level age cohort labor force participation rate annual average data is available from 2001 through 2018. Breaking down the overall labor force participation rate into three component age cohorts helps pinpoint contributing demographic trends. The overall working aged population (over age 16) increased by 7,000 from 2017 to 2018, while the labor force fell by

17,000. This labor force decline was driven by unemployment declining by 15,000 while employment fell by 3,000 (Note these amounts are subject to rounding error). By age cohort, the working age population under 25 fell by 47,000, the prime age population grew 20,000 and the over 54 population was up 34,000. This labor force decline of 17,000 was driven by losses in the under 25 (down 29,000) and over 54 population (down 19,000). The prime age labor force grew by 31,000.

The younger 16 to 24 age cohort has LFPR below that of prime age workers due primarily to school enrollment. In the early 2000s, the cohort's peaks and troughs largely corresponded with the overall labor force. Since the recession, the cohort has gradually fallen from a 2007 peak of 61.7% to a low of 49.3% in 2016. Unlike prime aged workers, which saw its LFPR and EPR diverge during the recession due to EPR shifts, young workers in Connecticut have had a multi-year long term trend downward from its 2007 peak. In 2018, the under 25 population had a LFPR of 52.1% and an EPR of 45.4, both down from a year before. From 2017 to 2018, the under 25 population decreased by 47,000 with corresponding employment decrease of 31,000 and an unemployment increase of 2,000 for an overall labor force decline of 29,000. As Connecticut's labor force ages, the steady participation rate increase of the over 54 workforce from 2001-2017 had been positive labor market shift for the state. In 2018 that trend shifted with sharp LFPR and EPR drops of 3.2 percentage points and 2.5 percentage points respectively from 2017. These over 54 age cohort shifts correspond with one year labor force declines of 22,000 and Employment declines of 15,000. When looking at smaller age cohorts that comprise this over 54 group, most of the losses occurred in the 55-64 cohort, which had labor force declines of 19,000, of which 13,000 was due to employment decline from a year before.

In addition to annual average age cohort labor market data, information by gender, race, and ethnicity is also available and shows some interesting shifts within the Connecticut labor market. Breaking down the four available race/ethnic cohorts into percent shares shows that the largest shift in Connecticut's labor force during the past 10 years has been the growth of the Hispanic cohort, which rose from 10.2% to 14.2% through 2018. Looking at unemployment rates, the unemployment rate for the Asian labor force has consistently been below other rates but recently converged with statewide and white populations as their rates fell. The rates for the Black and Hispanic populations in Connecticut have dropped as well, although those groups still trend above other cohorts.

The Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) dataset allows for detailed analysis of industry employment by various demographic characteristics and employment measures. Total employment peaked in 2008. At that time, 13% of the Connecticut labor force was under age 25, 66.8% were between 25 and 54 (also known as prime age), and 20.2% were over age 54. By 2018, the share below 25 fell to 11.5%, the prime age share dipped to 61.9%, and the share over 54 rose to 26.6%. To put it another way, in 2018 (the latest available from the QWI) overall employment is at 99.1% of the 2008 peak and by cohort, the under 25 and prime age groups are, respectively, down 12.1% and 8.3% while the over 54 cohort is up 30.4%. The demographic shifts over the past ten years continue trends that began even earlier. In 1998, the share of Connecticut employment for those three age cohorts was 12.6%, 73.5%, and 13.9%, respectively. This means the portion of the workforce in prime age is down 11.6 percentage points over 20 years while the portion over 54 has almost doubled. The increasing portion of older workers also indicates that a large share of the workforce is approaching retirement age, heightening the need for replacement workers in coming years.

The sectors with largest percentage of workers under 25 are Accommodation & Food Services, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, and Retail Trade. Two of these sectors, Accommodation & Food Services and Retail Trade saw their share of youth employment fall by 6.6 and 4.7 percentage points from 2008-2018. Arts, Entertainment & Recreation youth employment share increased by 7.6 percentage points. The Manufacturing and the Transportation & Warehousing sectors also had youth employment share increases, up 0.8 and 0.5 percentage points. Manufacturing also saw large increases in the over 54 age cohort, decreases in prime age employment, and overall industry growth in recent years. Transportation & Warehousing youth

employment growth is driven by expansion of that industry. Employment is up 16.4% overall since 2008.

Prime age employment ranges from 49.9% to 69.4% of employment for sectors in Connecticut. Every sector except Accommodation & Food Services has seen a decline in prime age employment share over the past 10 years. The sectors with the largest concentrations of prime age workers are Finance & Insurance (69.4%), Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (68.4%) and Information (67.6%).

While most sectors experienced declines in the share of under 25 and prime age employment over the past 10 years, every sector had share increases of its over 54 workforce. This ranged between a 2.3 point increase in Arts, Entertainment and Rec. to an 11.1 point increase in Utilities. Large sectors with significant over 54 employment shares include Manufacturing, (35.4%) which had a 10.6 point increase in the past ten years and Educational Services (30.8%). These two sectors employ 25.1% of the over 54 workforce compared to 20.2% of the workforce overall. With more than 35% of its workforce over age 54, Manufacturing will need to hire many replacement workers in addition to filling the new jobs that are expected to be added in the short term. Educational Services growth has been hindered by the declining population of school-age children, but the large share of workers over 54 in that sector indicates that many replacement workers will be needed even amid overall employment declines.

Nationally, by 2026 the labor force participation rate for those over age 65 is expected to be nearly double its 1996 level. In addition to preparing to replace retiring workers, industries will need to make adjustments to accommodate older workers. Healthcare and Social Assistance is the largest sector in the state overall, and employs the most workers over 54, with over 71,000. This sector has had the largest total increase of over 54 workers, up 20,000 since 2008. This growth dwarfs the corresponding growth for prime age workers, which increased 8,500 over 10 years. Employment for workers under 25 in this sector fell 1,600 since 2008.

40% of Connecticut's population has a Bachelor's degree or more compared to 33% for the nation. In Connecticut, 22% have Bachelor's degrees (compared to 20% nationally) while 18% have graduate or professional degrees (compared to 13% nationally). 30% of workers are employed in occupations that require at least a Bachelor's degree to enter the occupation. Many jobs within other occupations may require college degrees as well. Looking ahead, 43% of projected growth will be in occupations requiring at least a Bachelor's degree. In addition, during the 2016-2026 projections period there is a projected increase of 14,000 in employment in occupations that require more than a high school diploma but less than a Bachelor's with a total of 224,018 openings in this category.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics job openings are near a record high both nationally and in Connecticut. The Conference Board's Help Wanted on Line show nearly 50,000 job postings in Connecticut with 25% requiring a high school diploma, vocational training, or an Associate's Degree and 32% requiring a Bachelor's degree or more.

Connecticut's economy has been growing slowly since the end of the great recession. As of September 2019 Connecticut has now recovered 85% of the jobs lost from March 2008 to January 2010 one of the few states in the nation where employment remains below its pre-recession level. Nevertheless, employment remains on an upward track with total employment up 8,800 (0.5%) from one year ago and private sector employment up 10,500 (0.7%) September 2018 to September 2019.

The industries with the largest increases in demand are health care, professional scientific and technical services, social assistance and manufacturing. Demand in the health care industry overall is driven by the aging population. Restructuring within the industry is moving care away from the large institutions (hospitals and nursing care facilities) to ambulatory care. The largest projected increases through 2026 are in home health care services, offices of physicians, and outpatient care centers. Within professional scientific and technical services, computer system design, management consulting, and architectural & engineering will be adding the most jobs although every industry in this sector is projected to grow. Within social assistance, individual & family services will add the most jobs. Within manufacturing, the largest increases will be in transportation equipment manufacturing which includes aerospace and shipbuilding

followed by fabricated metal product manufacturing but several other manufacturing industries are also projected to gain. During the two-year period 2016Q2 to 2018Q2, Connecticut's overall employment grew by 6,350 jobs, or 0.4%. The private sector increased 12,537 (0.9%), while the government sector declined 6,187 (-2.6%).

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Most of the decline in Government employment was at the state level. Education and Health each declined about 1,000 jobs, while Public Administration fell by over 2,000. Local Government also contracted. Other industries of note include Accommodations and Food Services, which continues to add jobs at a faster rate than the overall economy and Construction which was down over 1,000 jobs from 2016Q2 to 2018Q2, mostly due to a sluggish second quarter last year but which has since added jobs. As of March 2019 construction was up 2,500 jobs from the previous year.

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Connecticut manufacturing continues to maintain strong employment growth that began in the first quarter of 2016. This growth is unique to the region. Our 2.8% growth during the two years that precede the short term projection period (2016Q2-2018Q2) compares favorably to the neighboring states of Massachusetts and New York, which were down 0.7% and 1.5%.

Connecticut's two-year Manufacturing growth outpaces the national average of 2.6% and is driven by strong gains in transportation equipment manufacturing. Announcements from major employers suggest that growth in this sector will continue for the foreseeable future.

Transportation equipment is Connecticut's largest manufacturing industry, which includes both aerospace and shipbuilding and encompasses about 28 percent of manufacturing employment in the state.

Over the past two years, overall manufacturing growth was heavily concentrated in transportation equipment, accelerating a multi-year trend. In total, 11 out of 19 3-digit NIACS manufacturing industries added a combined 5,867 jobs over these growing sectors. Two year manufacturing declines occurred in 8 industries and amounted to losses of 1,790 jobs. The largest two year declines occurred in Computer and Electronic Products (-713) and Machinery Manufacturing (-498).

Aerospace products and parts manufacturing is a component industry of transportation equipment. In 2018, Connecticut's Aerospace employment was the fifth highest in the country. This sector employs 2.1 percent of total private Connecticut employment, which is the third highest share in the country after Washington (3.0%) and Kansas (2.8%). Shipbuilding represents about 28 percent of transportation equipment manufacturing employment, and has continued to consistently add jobs, though growth has slowed in recent quarters. Unlike other manufacturing areas, shipbuilding has shown very little cyclicity since 2000. This differs significantly from shipbuilding employment nationally, which peaked in 2007 at 161,952, lost

24.7% of its employment by early 2011 and was just over 86.4% of peak levels by the end of 2018.

The portion of the manufacturing workforce over age 54 continues to increase suggesting that the need to replace retiring workers will only grow in coming years. Over the past 10 years, the share of manufacturing workers over 54 has had one of the largest industry increases, up 11.0 percentage points to 35.4% in 2018. With more than a third of its workforce over age 54, manufacturing will need to hire many replacement workers in addition to filling the new jobs that are expected to be added in the short term.

Consistent with the aging population, employment in Connecticut's health care sector has continued to expand. However there are structural changes within the sector which has implications for the outlook. Ambulatory care settings, such as Offices of Physicians, Home Health Care Services, and Outpatient Care Centers have been adding jobs which residential facilities such as nursing homes have been contracting. While employment at general hospitals increased in 2017, it declined slightly in 2018. Outpatient Care Centers have experienced large growth in the short term. From 2016 to 2018 that industry grew by 22.2%. In the past ten years it has nearly doubled, up 84.9% from 6,318 in 2008 to 11,650 in 2018. As with other sectors in the economy, the portion of the Healthcare and Social assistance workforce aged 55 and over is increasing. Since 2001 the sector has seen its over 54 workforce increase from 15.1% to 26.2% in 2018, levels slightly below the over 54 share for all industries.

The finance and Insurance sector of the economy has shed jobs during the past 10 years, down 19,259 jobs since 2008. Most of this decline occurred within the Insurance Carriers (-8,109 or 12.4%) and Credit Intermediation (-6,134 or 20.1%). This industry employs proportionally fewer younger and older workers than the overall economy.

Retail trade employment has been declining in recent years. Annual average declines began in 2015 down 0.1% from a year before. Prior to this period the industry seemed to track overall nonfarm employment change. From 2016-17 it fell 0.6% and accelerated its decline falling by 1.5% from 2017-18. As of May 2019, retail employment levels of 175,500 are just below the previous low of 176,400 reached in November 2008. The largest declines were seen in Grocery stores (-1.7%), Clothing stores (-4.7%), and Health & Personal Care stores (-4.3%), which all declined by over 580 jobs. Despite this challenging landscape for retail trade, Auto Parts, Accessories, and Tire Stores (+293 jobs, +6.3%), Building Material & Supplies dealers (+274 jobs, +2.1%), Furniture Stores (+128, +4.9%) and seven other detailed industries added jobs over the year. The overall trend for retail is the result of changes in consumer preferences derivative of online shopping and evident throughout the country. This reduced retail demand has increased demand for workers in the transportation and warehousing industry, which has been adding jobs since 2010.

A vast majority of job growth in Transportation and Warehousing has been driven by the Warehousing and Storage segment of the sector, which is up 1,729 jobs over the year. Other internet commerce-related industries such as Courier & Express Delivery Services (+647 jobs), and General Freight Trucking (+196 jobs) added jobs in continuance of multi-year trends. Taxi & Limousine Service and Other Ground Passenger Transportation were down a combined 204 jobs, which is likely impacted by the growing popularity of ridesharing services. The strong gains in Warehousing and Storage employment began in 2013 and have added 4,544 jobs through 2018, an overall increase of 55%. The 1,729 increase from 2017-18 alone is a 15.6% expansion, some of this increase may be attributed to the 2018 opening of a FedEx distribution center in Middletown which was noted to add between 500-1,000 jobs. Other media announcements indicate that additional warehouses and distribution centers are expected to open in coming years. Additional sources suggest that the nationwide shortage of truck drivers is contributing to warehousing expansion in Connecticut because that industry is shifting from long haul routes to shorter trips, and locations in the state can distribute to both New York and Boston.

The workforce age distribution of the Retail and Transportation & Warehousing industries differ in some ways from each other and from the overall Connecticut labor force. Retail has a much larger share of its workforce under age 25 than the overall economy, 25 and 12 percent

respectively. As that sector declined, its under 25 workforce has fallen 18% over the past 10 years, from 53,737 to 43,899 in 2018. Its prime age workforce is down 3.2% while its over 54 workforce has increased over 10 years by 8,748 or 27.2% to 40,892 in 2018. Over the past ten years, Transportation and Warehousing grew 16.4%. By age cohort, 48.6% of that ten year growth occurred in the over 54 age cohort, 6.2% in the prime age cohort and 23% in the under 25 cohort. This differs significantly from the overall economy, which was down 0.9% overall with the over 54 cohort up 30.4% and the prime and under 25 cohorts down -8.3 and -12.1% respectively. From 2017 to 2018, the industry experience a large uptick in under age 25 employment, in 2017 they were 8.7% of the labor force but accounted for 25.5% of growth through 2018.

At the onset of FY 2020 there were 620 eligible individuals being served by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB). Of that number, 604 of these individuals had implemented Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs). The projected number of new IPEs for FY 2020 is approximately 125. Added to the 620 eligible individuals with pending and implemented IPEs at the onset of FY 2020, this would represent approximately 745 eligible individuals that are projected to receive services under an IPE in FY 2020. Projections for FY 2021 closely parallel FY 2020 projections, with approximately 750 individuals anticipated to receive services under an IPE in that fiscal year. In FY 2022, anticipated growth in the program, resulting from continued and focused outreach efforts to eye doctors and community-based organizations, is anticipated to yield an increase in the total number of eligible individuals served, potentially reaching 775 eligible individuals.

ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

Computer system design and related services is 27% of employment in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector but represented 42% of the projected growth in that sector. Occupations within this industry with the largest projected employment increase are Applications Software Developers, Computer and Information Systems Managers, Computer Systems Analysts, Systems Software Developers, and Customer Service Representatives. While not necessarily “emerging” as these occupations are long established, the restructuring of the healthcare industry toward ambulatory and home care has increased demand for Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides. Combined employment in these two occupations is projected to grow by over 10,000 with over 80,000 total openings to fill the new positions and replace workers who either exit the labor force or transfer to different occupations.

Employers are seeking a wide range of knowledge, skills, credential, and licenses. In the large and growing health care sector, the largest demand is for Registered Nurses with a majority of job postings in this occupation currently seeking RNs with a Bachelor’s Degree even though an RN license is obtainable with an Associate’s Degree. Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides require less education and training. Within the growing manufacturing sector, hiring is occurring at every education level. The occupations showing the most growth with the Computer Systems Design and Related Services generally require a bachelor’s degree.

A concern is finding enough qualified people to meet employer demand not only in manufacturing, but the state’s other industry sectors as Connecticut will face a surge in retirements. Forty-eight percent of all jobs in the state are identified as middle-skill and the demand for middle-skill jobs is expected to remain strong. Connecticut’s supply of high-skill and lower-skill workers exceeds demand, while the reverse is true for middle-skill workers. Overall labor market measures, such as a low unemployment rate and high employment to population ratio, suggest that demographics and slow population growth are the largest challenges Connecticut faces as it attempts to accelerate job growth.

Middle-skill jobs generally require some significant education and training beyond high school but less than a bachelor’s degree including associate’s degrees, vocational certificates, and on-the-job training (i.e., apprenticeships). Other qualities that are commonly lacking among recent hires or attempted hires are overall employability and technical skills. This includes deficits in advanced technical skills, math, writing, reading,

English proficiency and computer skills. With the low unemployment rate in the state, employers are having difficulty filling positions at all skill levels and as a result job openings are near a record high. The Conference Board's Help Wanted on Line index shows nearly 50,000 job postings in Connecticut with 25% requiring a high school diploma, vocational training, or an Associate's Degree and 32% requiring a Bachelor's degree or more.

The various entities, partners and stakeholders comprising Connecticut's extensive workforce development system have planned and implemented a broad array of innovative initiatives addressing Connecticut's workforce development priorities. They are described in detail in later sections of the plan.

Connecticut's unemployment rate peaked in November 2010 at 9.3 percent and has since fallen to 3.6 percent as of October, 2019. Connecticut's unemployment rate is at its lowest level since early 2002. Prior to 2011, Connecticut's unemployment rate was characteristically at or below national levels. From early 2011 through late 2018, Connecticut's unemployment rate remained persistently above US levels, with the largest spread being 0.7 percentage points in October 2014. During the first half of 2019, The US and Connecticut unemployment rates have converged.

Annual average labor force participation peaked in 2008 at 69 percent, a level not seen since the early 1990s. After reaching a low of 64.9 percent in 2013, it was 63.1% percent in 2018 after dropping from 66.6% in 2017. This drop corresponds with sharp declines in participation of the over 54 age cohort. That cohort is down 3.2 points since 2017 to 45.8%. That decline equates to an over age 54 drop of 22,000 since 2017 and mostly occurred in the age 55-64 segment of that group. The narrowing gap between labor force participation and employment to population ratios (EPR) corresponds with unemployment rate decreases in recent years. EPR peaked in 2007 at 65.7% a year before the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR). Since toughing in 2013, it has an average year-over-year percentage point increase of 0.6 percentage points through 2018. From 2017 to 2018 it was down 0.2 points.

State-level age cohort labor force participation rate annual average data is available from 2001 through 2018. Breaking down the overall labor force participation rate into three component age cohorts helps pinpoint contributing demographic trends. The overall working aged population (over age 16) increased by 7,000 from 2017 to 2018, while the labor force fell by 17,000. This labor force decline was driven by unemployment declining by 15,000 while employment fell by 3,000 (Note these amounts are subject to rounding error). By age cohort, the working age population under 25 fell by 47,000, the prime age population grew 20,000 and the over 54 population was up 34,000. This labor force decline of 17,000 was driven by losses in the under 25 (down 29,000) and over 54 population (down 19,000). The prime age labor force grew by 31,000.

The younger 16 to 24 age cohort has LFPR below that of prime age workers due primarily to school enrollment. In the early 2000s, the cohort's peaks and troughs largely corresponded with the overall labor force. Since the recession, the cohort has gradually fallen from a 2007 peak of 61.7% to a low of 49.3% in 2016. Unlike prime aged workers, which saw its LFPR and EPR diverge during the recession due to EPR shifts, young workers in Connecticut have had a multi-year long term trend downward from its 2007 peak. In 2018, the under 25 population had a LFPR of 52.1% and an EPR of 45.4, both down from a year before. From 2017 to 2018, the under 25 population decreased by 47,000 with corresponding employment decrease of 31,000 and an unemployment increase of 2,000 for an overall labor force decline of 29,000. As Connecticut's labor force ages, the steady participation rate increase of the over 54 workforce from 2001-2017 had been positive labor market shift for the state. In 2018 that trend shifted with sharp LFPR and EPR drops of 3.2 percentage points and 2.5 percentage points respectively from 2017. These over 54 age cohort shifts correspond with one year labor force declines of 22,000 and Employment declines of 15,000. When looking at smaller age cohorts that comprise this over 54 group, most of the losses occurred in the 55-64 cohort, which had labor force declines of 19,000, of which 13,000 was due to employment decline from a year before.

In addition to annual average age cohort labor market data, information by gender, race, and ethnicity is also available and shows some interesting shifts within the Connecticut labor

market. Breaking down the four available race/ethnic cohorts into percent shares shows that the largest shift in Connecticut's labor force during the past 10 years has been the growth of the Hispanic cohort, which rose from 10.2% to 14.2% through 2018. Looking at unemployment rates, the unemployment rate for the Asian labor force has consistently been below other rates but recently converged with statewide and white populations as their rates fell. The rates for the Black and Hispanic populations in Connecticut have dropped as well, although those groups still trend above other cohorts.

The Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) dataset allows for detailed analysis of industry employment by various demographic characteristics and employment measures.

Total employment peaked in 2008. At that time, 13% of the Connecticut labor force was under age 25, 66.8% were between 25 and 54 (also known as prime age), and 20.2% were over age 54. By 2018, the share below 25 fell to 11.5%, the prime age share dipped to 61.9%, and the share over 54 rose to 26.6%. To put it another way, in 2018 (the latest available from the QWI) overall employment is at 99.1% of the 2008 peak and by cohort, the under 25 and prime age groups are, respectively, down 12.1% and 8.3% while the over 54 cohort is up 30.4%. The demographic shifts over the past ten years continue trends that began even earlier. In 1998, the share of Connecticut employment for those three age cohorts was 12.6%, 73.5%, and 13.9%, respectively. This means the portion of the workforce in prime age is down 11.6 percentage points over 20 years while the portion over 54 has almost doubled. The increasing portion of older workers also indicates that a large share of the workforce is approaching retirement age, heightening the need for replacement workers in coming years.

The sectors with largest percentage of workers under 25 are Accommodation & Food Services, Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, and Retail Trade. Two of these sectors, Accommodation & Food Services and Retail Trade saw their share of youth employment fall by 6.6 and 4.7 percentage points from 2008-2018. Arts, Entertainment & Recreation youth employment share increased by 7.6 percentage points. The Manufacturing and the Transportation & Warehousing sectors also had youth employment share increases, up 0.8 and 0.5 percentage points. Manufacturing also saw large increases in the over 54 age cohort, decreases in prime age employment, and overall industry growth in recent years. Transportation & Warehousing youth employment growth is driven by expansion of that industry. Employment is up 16.4% overall since 2008.

Prime age employment ranges from 49.9% to 69.4% of employment for sectors in Connecticut. Every sector except Accommodation & Food Services has seen a decline in prime age employment share over the past 10 years. The sectors with the largest concentrations of prime age workers are Finance & Insurance (69.4%), Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (68.4%) and Information (67.6%).

While most sectors experienced declines in the share of under 25 and prime age employment over the past 10 years, every sector had share increases of its over 54 workforce. This ranged between a 2.3 point increase in Arts, Entertainment and Rec. to an 11.1 point increase in Utilities. Large sectors with significant over 54 employment shares include Manufacturing, (35.4%) which had a 10.6 point increase in the past ten years and Educational Services (30.8%). These two sectors employ 25.1% of the over 54 workforce compared to 20.2% of the workforce overall. With more than 35% of its workforce over age 54, Manufacturing will need to hire many replacement workers in addition to filling the new jobs that are expected to be added in the short term. Educational Services growth has been hindered by the declining population of school-age children, but the large share of workers over 54 in that sector indicates that many replacement workers will be needed even amid overall employment declines.

Nationally, by 2026 the labor force participation rate for those over age 65 is expected to be nearly double its 1996 level. In addition to preparing to replace retiring workers, industries will need to make adjustments to accommodate older workers. Healthcare and Social Assistance is the largest sector in the state overall, and employs the most workers over 54, with over 71,000. This sector has had the largest total increase of over 54 workers, up 20,000 since 2008. This growth dwarfs the corresponding growth for prime age workers, which increased 8,500 over 10 years. Employment for workers under 25 in this sector fell 1,600 since 2008.

40% of Connecticut's population has a Bachelor's degree or more compared to 33% for the nation. In Connecticut, 22% have Bachelor's degrees (compared to 20% nationally) while 18% have graduate or professional degrees (compared to 13% nationally). 30% of workers are employed in occupations that require at least a Bachelor's degree to enter the occupation. Many jobs within other occupations may require college degrees as well. Looking ahead, 43% of projected growth will be in occupations requiring at least a Bachelor's degree. In addition, during the 2016-2026 projections period there is a projected increase of 14,000 in employment in occupations that require more than a high school diploma but less than a Bachelor's with a total of 224,018 openings in this category.

II.(A)(1)(B)(iv) Skill Gaps -Describe apparent "skill gaps."According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics job openings are near a record high both nationally and in Connecticut. The Conference Board's Help Wanted on Line show nearly 50,000 job postings in Connecticut with 25% requiring a high school diploma, vocational training, or an Associate's Degree and 32% requiring a Bachelor's degree or more.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS
On October 29, 2019, Governor Lamont signed executive order #4, directing the creation of the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), the new State Workforce Board. The Council is responsible for partnering with the business community and reducing barriers among state government agencies so that Connecticut can have the most aligned high-quality, and equitable workforce development system in the country. The following outlines strategies and activities to support the work of the GWC.

Connecticut Department of Labor

Registered Apprenticeship and Pre- Apprenticeship

The Office of Apprenticeship Training (OAT) administers Connecticut's Registered Apprenticeship system, which is supported by the state's general fund, federal funding, and industry support from registration fees. Registered apprenticeship is a proven solution for training and retaining talent and offers individuals the opportunity of "learning while earning."

OAT provides registration, monitoring, technical assistance and consulting services for the administration of apprenticeship agreements per state regulations and standards. Registered Apprenticeship provides a structured training strategy that combines on-the-job training with related technical instruction. The office also qualifies employers for tax credits, works with the Department of Education, Department of Consumer Protection and other state agencies, and performs outreach to veterans, employer groups, unions and many community-based organizations to promote Registered Apprenticeship and Registered Pre-Apprenticeship throughout Connecticut.

Aggressive outreach by CTDOL/OAT has increased apprenticeship in all areas. Currently, 1,710 active employer-sponsors and 6,417 registered apprentices are involved in the program. In addition, 1,608 apprentices completed their apprenticeship training while 3,819 new apprentices were registered in the program this year – a significant increase over last year's total of 2,474. CTDOL/OAT intends to add an additional 800 apprentices over the next three years. This year, the program expanded into the insurance, banking, barbering and healthcare sectors through new industry partnerships while continuing its expansion efforts in the manufacturing and construction sectors.

Systemic modifications, such as streamlining the Apprentice Sponsorship registration and compliance paperwork, to assisting in creating a more user friendly, self-service system, have been instituted. For example, Registered Apprenticeship (RA) sponsors and Related Technical Instructors (RTI) may request to have their programs listed on the state's Eligible Training and Providers List available on the CTDOL website. This can lead to WIOA funding opportunities to support related instruction, OJT and supportive services.

Registered Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Industries

Registered Apprenticeship programs have grown outside of the traditional industries as more industries require skilled workers and trainings tailored to specific occupations. CTDOL/ OAT apprenticeship opportunities are now available in new industries including:

- **The Insurance Claims Representative national apprenticeship program was built in partnership with The Hartford insurance company, USDOL-OAT and Capital Community College. Apprentices participate in insurance-related instruction, paid on-the-job training, mentoring, and academic coaching while working on the final year of their associate degrees. Upon successful completion of the one-year program, apprentices have completed their degrees, obtained non-credit certificates in Insurance Claims Operations, passed the Connecticut Adjuster's license exam, and received their Federal Registered Apprenticeship completion certificate.**
- The Nurse Residency apprenticeship program at Yale New Haven Hospital and throughout Yale Healthcare Network hospitals includes extensive mentoring by individually assigned experienced nurse practitioners/preceptors. Upon successful completion of the program, participants that are systemically trained for the specific nursing occupation receive a nationally recognized certificate of apprenticeship completion of the Nurse Residency Apprentice Program issued by the CT DOL/OAT.
- The Junior Software Developer Apprenticeship with Independent Software, LLC. trains apprentices in the core set of skills required to be effective as a junior software developer or software engineer. Apprentices are matched with other companies to continue to develop their skills and abilities upon completion of the A100 program,
- ***The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Apprenticeship Program, supported through a \$10.8 million state bond allocation, continues to provide financial assistance in the form of a wage subsidy to manufacturers and tuition reimbursement to approved Apprentice Related Instruction Training Providers. To date over 700 apprentices and over 200 companies have received support through this program.***

Apprenticeship Education Pathway

CTDOL/OAT has formalized the Apprenticeship Education pathway to move individuals from multiple entry points through their educational and apprenticeships programs culminating in a credentialed career and a degree.

Pre-Apprenticeship

Quality pre-apprenticeship programs are an integral piece of a pathway for employers and students. A student may earn on-the-job credits toward a registered apprenticeship if employed, on a part time basis, after school, or as part of a Work Based Learning release program that may be established by the school and an apprenticeship employer sponsor. Pre-apprentices can carry up to 2,000 hours of on-the-job experience upon graduation into their registered apprenticeship program similar to how an Advanced Placement (AP) program is designed and recognized.

There are increasing amounts of careers that do not require a college degree yet require a certificate or credential inclusive or exclusive of post-secondary education. Career Technical Education (CTE), enhanced in high schools with industry recognized credentials, has recently been utilized as a workforce development pipeline.

CTDOL/OAT has partnered with the CT State Department of Education (SDE) to begin statewide strategic planning for CTE Perkins V programming implementation. Various plans will encompass policy considerations and the creation of Industry Councils at the local school district level for CTE credentialing, career exploration, career pathway development, business and industry led curricula alignment, Work Based Learning (WBL) partnerships and articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions for college credits.

CTDOL/OAT, in partnership with SDE, has expanded CTE under Perkins V, thus increasing Perkins V Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities. These include work-based learning and the development of industry recognized credentials. CTDOL/ OAT has partnered

with nearly 30 high schools and community colleges to credential their CTE courses and link them to the pre-apprenticeship program. Students enrolled at those schools now have the ability to enhance their theoretical knowledge with hands-on skill development. Additionally, through relationships built at these schools, CTDOL/OAT has been able to present the benefit of these credentials to school boards and encourage stable funding for Career Technical Education moving forward. Some new, exciting pre-apprenticeships include:

Goodwin College Insurance Pre-apprenticeship - creates a talent pipeline for insurance distributors in CT. Students obtain an Insurance Sales and Service Certificate, sit for state licensing, and enter paid pre-apprenticeship. After completing the 150 hours of pre-apprenticeship, they move into their full-time job as an apprentice.

Women Can Weld - The North Central Region Jobs Funnel Program partnered with the Ironworkers Local 15 Apprenticeship Training Program to conduct a pre-apprenticeship program targeted specifically for women to get an introduction into welding.

Future Bankers' Apprenticeship Program - pairs instruction to pre-apprentices at Crosby High School with on-the-job training in local banks.

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative - focuses on high school students in addressing the hiring needs of Electric Boat, members of the East Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA), and other manufacturers.

First Books Initiative

This December, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the First Books program partnered with the CTDOL Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) to purchase high quality books to support literacy and learning for children visiting the American Job Centers (AJCs) with their parents.

Through this initiative, OWC in partnership with The Workplace and the Northwest Regional Workforce Development Board, was awarded \$5,000 in credits to purchase books for families receiving services at the AJCs. The books were provided to a cross sector of AJC customers to encourage reading and to promote parents as their children's first teachers. This effort aligned well with AJC family centered approaches to support positive engagement and pathways to success.

Activities included:

- Engagement of parents and grandparents at the AJCs in selecting the titles so that parents are in the center of the initiative;
- Introduction of learning at an early age, increase literacy levels, and teach parents the importance of reading to their children;
- Development of a lending library at the AJC; and
- Activities and celebrations to foster opportunities for parents and their children to receive culturally diverse books through the various service delivery models across the AJC continuum of programs and services.

RETAIN-CT

In September 2018, the Connecticut Department of Labor was awarded Phase I funding under the Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) Demonstration grant, jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the Employment and Training Administration, and the Social Security Administration.

This project tests the impact of early strategies that improve stay-at-work/return-to-work (SAW/RTW) outcomes of individuals who experience an injury or illness while employed. CTDOL has implemented a State-level intervention program designed to improve long-term SAW/RTW outcomes for workers with emerging musculoskeletal concerns to address the problem of growing work disability in the Connecticut workforce. The Phase I pilot is an eighteen (18)-month project focused on preventing long-term disability and job loss among workers with musculoskeletal injuries and disorders by providing early return-to-work facilitation and by encouraging best practices in occupational medicine. The project is led by CTDOL and involves other stakeholders, including the University of Connecticut Health Center,

Capital Workforce Partners, The Hartford, community healthcare providers, and other State agencies.

The goals of the program are to:

- build capacity and public-private partnerships necessary to create specialized training for health care providers in RTW planning;
- create a uniform billing system that enables insurance companies to reimburse providers for RTW efforts;
- develop a State-based early RTW coordination program; and
- design metrics for the continuous evaluation and improvement of these systems.

Phase 2 funding is expected to be made available in early 2020, which will allow 4 to 5 Phase 1 grantees the opportunity to bring their pilot projects to scale. Funding of nearly \$20 million is expected to be made available per state for that purpose and CTDOL will likely apply. This requires a project involving all five workforce development boards, at least four additional occupational health clinics, and several insurance companies providing workers' compensation and/or STD/LTD group disability benefits.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

CSDE continues to support Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programs (I-BEST) projects using Title II, WIOA funds. CSDE conducted a new competition in April 2017 in which six adult education providers applied for and were awarded funding to offer training programs which aligned with their local workforce development boards' identified industry sectors. Certification programs include manufacturing, customer service, health occupations and auto technicians. These projects, entitled Program Enhancement Projects (PEP), are being conducted through three Regional Education Service Centers: (CREC, EdAdvance, Eastconn), New London Adult Education, Norwich Adult Education, and the Women and Families Center in Meriden. The total funding for the projects is \$180,000 with the promise to support a minimum of 94 participants. CSDE will continue to offer the I-BEST program in its next program year.

Connecticut Workforce Development Council

The Connecticut Workforce Development Council has received a grant of \$500,000 from the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) to provide a more customized approach to career planning ultimately leading to greater promise of labor market success. The CHEFA Grant Committee and Board of Directors recognized the need for funds to remove the barriers to employment, which usually are unpaid training costs, transportation, childcare, and work-related necessities (uniforms, tools, etc.). The grant is administered through case managers at the American Job Centers throughout the state. Funds are paid directly to vendors, not individuals, and are tracked through databases detailing demographics of individuals served, job sectors, amounts paid and other data.

A possible second year of funding at the \$250,000 level for FY 2020 is being considered by the CHEFA Grant Committee and Board of Directors and will be reviewed in January 2020.

University of Connecticut

The Next Generation Connecticut initiative intends to significantly expand educational opportunities, research and innovation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines at the University of Connecticut. The broad objective is to leverage UConn's strengths and resources to help build Connecticut's future workforce, create jobs and invigorate the state economy. The cornerstone of the effort is a major increase in student enrollment, faculty expansion, development of facilities for enhanced STEM research and teaching, and expansion of critical programs at UConn's Hartford and Stamford campuses.

Next Generation Connecticut aims to transform UConn into an elite public research institution, fueling Connecticut's economy with new technologies, training highly skilled graduates, creating new companies, patents, licenses and high-wage jobs. Components include: hiring research and teaching faculty in STEM disciplines; building research facilities for materials science, physics, biology, engineering, cognitive science, genomics and related disciplines; constructing teaching laboratories; creating a STEM Honors program to attract high achieving undergraduate students; upgrading aging infrastructure; expanding Stamford degree programs; providing

student housing in Stamford; and relocating the Greater Hartford campus to downtown Hartford. This aggressive investment hopes to dramatically increase UConn STEM research and graduates, producing innovations and inventions contributing directly to sustainable economic growth in Connecticut, with high-wage jobs for a STEM-skilled and educated workforce.

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

In 2017, CTHSS was renamed to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) to better reflect its mission which is focused on education and workforce development. Since that time, the CTECS Central Office leadership, beginning with Superintendent of Schools Jeffrey Wihbey, CTECS schools principals and CTECS faculty, has actively engaged in a wide range of partnerships and collaboration with employers, post-secondary institutions, K-12 schools, workforce agencies and others.

Working for Students and Connecticut's Future, the CTECS 2019 to 2022 strategic plan is central to accomplishing the system's mission. The plan is a product of one and a half years of gathering data, soliciting input, and reaching shared consensus with our stakeholders, industry, staff, students, parents and partners. It's a three-year road map that will inform all decision making and daily work. It outlines what CTECS wants to achieve, how to achieve it, and how success will be measured. Each of the five goals in the plan is accompanied by a set of strategies which are the action steps we will take to achieve each goal. A number of performance measures will be used to monitor our progress.

Our goals and strategies are organized around five themes:

- **Culture, Climate, Instruction:** Cultivate and sustain safe, effective, collaborative schools for staff and students.
- **Industry Alignment and Collaboration:** Collaborate with key regional employers to enhance and expand a coordinated statewide effort to develop curriculum, career pathways and experiential opportunities that cultivate highly-employable, workforce-ready students; respond to industry needs; and prioritize economic development.
- **Access and Opportunities:** Partner and strengthen relationships with K-12 school districts and colleges to create clearly articulated career and technical education pathways and opportunities for a broader set of students and adult learners.
- **Systems of Excellence:** Redesign the CTECS operational model to facilitate flexibility, innovation and responsive education, to achieve success as a new, independent agency.
- **Human Capital:** Recruit, hire, develop and retain a diverse and high-quality CTECS workforce.

Working for Students and Connecticut's Future reaffirms CTECS' commitment to its mission of preparing students for successful careers and supporting Connecticut businesses and industries. The plan also demands close collaboration with various industries throughout the state, and the provision of ample opportunities for students to engage in hands-on, career development experience. Going forward these efforts and partnerships will become increasingly important elements of the state's broad workforce development strategy, particularly in occupations in critical industries demanding specific technical skills.

State Board of Education – Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

In September 2018, the CSDE met with the CT-DOL to discuss Connecticut long-term industry and occupational projection data. In November 2018, the Assistant Director of Research and Information in the Office of Research and Information at the CT-DOL matched Connecticut industry and occupational data and projections to the National Career Clusters Framework. The CSDE examined each of the five WIBs occupational areas of growth and utilized an article published by the CT-DOL and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (CDECD) pertaining to Connecticut's long-term industry and occupational projections for 2016–2026. Through a triangulation of these data, and knowing the data are

most complete for industries having payroll employment covered by unemployment insurance, top clusters for Connecticut emerged.

In February 2019, the CSDE convened a core Perkins V leadership group consisting of key stakeholders to: analyze Connecticut Workforce Needs, establish Program Career Clusters and Pathways, and inform the CTE Transition and State Plans.

After consideration of the Perkins V leadership group analysis, stakeholder feedback, and the National Forum on Educational Statistics (NCES) and the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) coding system, the approved Perkins V Connecticut Career Clusters that will drive the pathways and programs or programs of study (POS) to be supported, developed or improved at the State and local levels are:

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources;
- Architecture and Construction;
- Business Management and Administration;
- Family and Consumer Sciences;
- Finance;
- Health Science;
- Hospitality and Tourism;
- Information Technology;
- Manufacturing;
- Marketing;
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; and
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

Partnering in CTE

In Connecticut, the five regional WDBs are geographically aligned to the six RESCs across the state. The CSDE partnered with the CT-DOL and the Perkins V Leadership Workgroup to create a map that shows WIB/RESC alignment. The CSDE is working with the CT-DOL to establish a communications pipeline between WDBs and eligible recipients to stay up-to-date with workforce data, pathway and POS development, and high-skill, high-wage and in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

In addition, the CT Perkins V plan promotes coordination and collaboration amongst agencies to ensure that every student, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, family wealth, zip code or disability status, is prepared to succeed in lifelong learning and work beyond school. The following themes are supported throughout the plan including:

- Connecticut's vision for CTE is that all Connecticut's students have access today to high-quality, culturally responsive guidance, teaching, and learning that will position them to graduate tomorrow as innovators equipped with adaptable, transferable skills that will contribute to the growth of Connecticut's high-knowledge economy.
- Connecticut's vision for education and workforce development demands schools, districts, and community colleges design rigorous pathways and programs of study from a perspective of bold innovation that fosters deep and long-lasting changes.
- Furthermore, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Perkins V goals align to Title IV, Part B in which 21st Century School programs can partner with in-demand fields of the local workforce or build career competencies and career readiness. This funding may provide workforce development boards with additional opportunities to collaborate and leverage resources for in-school youth services. Continued coordination with these programs will help to unify CSDE guidance.

- The CSDE collaborates with outside agencies in order to braid funding, ensure cohesiveness among programs, and educate the whole child from preK–12.

United States Department of Labor Job Corps

Job Corps is a national, federally funded educational and vocational training program administered by USDOL, that helps low income youth (ages 16-24) gain workplace skills, train for high-demand occupations, and become independent and self-sufficient. With centers in Hartford and New Haven, more than 400 students enroll each year to earn a high school diploma or GED, learn a trade, obtain third party certifications and receive assistance finding a job. CTDOL has an assigned staff member who provides on-site support to the Hartford and New Haven Job Corps Centers.

Connecticut P20-WIN

Connecticut's Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network – P20 WIN – represents a groundbreaking approach to education and workforce training-related data sharing in Connecticut. P20 WIN provides a secure data vehicle for producing critical information to understand patterns over time and inform policy and strategy decisions to improve outcomes of education and training programs for Connecticut students. With P20 WIN, Connecticut can evaluate how well public education and training programs prepare students for additional education and careers in Connecticut. The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), the University of Connecticut (UConn), the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) are the State entities actively participating in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making about data access and use. P20 WIN provides a systematic, secure and repeatable process to gather and analyze critical data to understand the impact of investments in education and workforce training programs, leading to better outcomes. Information regarding P20 WIN is available at <http://www.ct.edu/p20win>.

ADS- BESB

BESB VR Counselors directly facilitated the registration of 27 clients in partner services during onsite meetings with clients at the American Job Centers. Engaging clients who have some basic English language with the American Job Centers to enroll them into classes and or training sessions that assist with resume writing or translating Spanish resumes into English has also been occurring. At the American Job Centers, these clients have also participated in mock interviews, and job seeking skills classes have also been utilized.

ADS Aging

SCSEP participants often enter the program with few job skills and multiple barriers to employment. SCSEP only allows for a total of 48-months of training. The program is mindful of these challenges when developing an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) for participants and the focus of these plans is on the types of jobs that allow for short to moderate training periods to ensure participants are prepared for employment in growing labor markets. Such labor markets and trainings include Customer Service, Home Health Aide, Personal Care Workers and Food Service/Preparation.

B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

The preceding discussion of Connecticut's workforce development activities addresses an inventory of selected noteworthy initiatives, programs, and services responsive to the goals that serve as the focus for this Unified State Plan. The process of developing Connecticut's Unified State Plan included review of the Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities.

Strengths

Connecticut continues to transform its workforce system into a business and industry driven model and design its services to meet local and statewide industry demands. The state incorporates the key elements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) through its sector partnerships, career pathways development and system collaboration efforts.

The Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) exemplifies the strengths of the state's workforce system. The MPI is an evidence-based, demand-driven workforce pipeline model developed by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and its partners. In four years, the regional MPI partnership has placed more than 1,500 people in living-wage jobs by: a) leveraging existing workforce development, industry, education and training, economic development, and apprenticeship systems and resources; b) using a demand-driven approach that responds directly to the documented needs of sectors with pressing workforce needs; and c) leveraging the MPI's assessment, customized training, and job placement model, which quickly prepares and immediately places more than 90% of workers (most of whom lack relevant industry experience) in jobs that offer a living wage and career pathway.

The MPI model holds great potential to stimulate the Connecticut economy because it: a) can be replicated in several industries (e.g., manufacturing, health care, construction, transportation and logistics, hospitality, and IT) that project strong, long-term demand for skilled workers statewide; and b) has a high return on investment (the 1,500+ job placements the MPI has produced to date have – thanks to employment multipliers – created more than 3,800 jobs and produced approximately \$120 million in annual wages).

Connecticut's workforce development efforts are supported and encouraged by the strong relationships among executive leadership in key State agencies and key administrative and program staff in each organization. State, regional and local partners have a demonstrable track record of successful collaboration on applying for and winning significant national competitive grant awards that address strategic priorities, developing innovative partnerships responsive to employer priorities, and effective sharing of information and best practices.

Two examples illustrate this challenge:

First, transportation consistently ranks as one of the two biggest barriers to enrolling in and completing postsecondary education for low-income Connecticut residents. The Connecticut Department of Transportation's U-Pass CT program allows students enrolled in credit-bearing programs at most Connecticut community colleges and state universities and at all UConn campuses to ride buses and trains on most public transit systems for free. Students enrolled in non-credit-bearing programs do not currently qualify for U-Pass CT, however. Given the strong evidence behind non-credit-bearing programs (e.g., the workforce pipeline model) as a high-return-on-investment tool for matching inexperienced workers to in-demand, good jobs, expanding the U-Pass CT program to pipeline participants and others enrolled in demand-driven, non-credit education and training programs would represent a low-cost investment that leverages the existing public transit and U-Pass CT infrastructure and promises an immediate benefit for workers and businesses.

Second, childcare consistently ranks as the other top-two barrier low-income residents face to accessing postsecondary education. Fortunately, Connecticut's childcare subsidy program, Care 4 Kids, recently received a \$14 million increase in federal funding to raise reimbursement rates for families served by the program to participate in postsecondary education, vocational skills training, adult basic education, or job search. Only parents who receive cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and who participate in the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program, however, qualify for this benefit. Other low-income parents – including those who receive SNAP and/or Medicaid – are not eligible for Care 4 Kids, dramatically reducing their ability to take advantage of opportunities (including tuition-free opportunities) to enhance their skills and earn the credentials they need to qualify for a good job on a career pathway and escape unemployment, under-employment, and low-wage employment. According to the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Connecticut is one of only two states in the country that does not currently have a provision that allows all low-income parents enrolled in job training programs or college to use the state childcare subsidy program. Expanding Care 4 Kids eligibility to all low-income parents would create upward mobility, as research shows that subsidies promote mothers' educational attainment, particularly for those with low education levels.

The leadership role of the local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) – collaborating with CTDOL, other key State agencies and numerous local partners and stakeholders – is a key asset

in Connecticut's ability to develop innovative strategies, programs and services responsive to the needs of jobseekers, workers and employers. The WDBs and their partners have developed numerous effective programs, shared successful efforts and adjusted strategies as results dictate.

Connecticut has an extensive network of committed, mission-driven, effective community-based organizations and non-profit service providers delivering effective on workforce programs and services accessible to key target populations. Connecticut has an active philanthropic sector that is increasingly engaged in supporting workforce development-related initiatives, including local community foundations, local United Ways and corporate foundations.

Outlined throughout this plan are numerous examples of workforce programs that strive to address the essential components of a comprehensive approach to career pathways responsive to employer needs and focused on good career opportunities.

Improvement Opportunities

The newly created Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) brings together many of the most influential leaders in Connecticut's workforce ecosystem to concurrently address business and workforce needs. A successful workforce development system depends upon collaboration, alignment, innovation, equity, performance accountability, and access to sufficient information and data. The GWC shares a commitment to eliminating administrative and statutory barriers to success wherever possible and supports Connecticut's efforts to improve outcomes for its workers, students, and businesses by creating a comprehensive vision and strategy for growing the economy through innovative, accessible, and easily navigable workforce programs.

Continuous professional development is required for workforce system staff in order to remain knowledgeable of current labor market conditions, as well as the latest initiatives and strategies. Cross agency staff training allows for increased knowledge of partner programs, creating a more holistic system. There are opportunities to establish more consistency around elements of the service delivery strategies so customers can more easily navigate services within the system. Many examples of local best practices and successful strategic implementation exist, but there is a need to take these best practices and identify how, or if, they can be appropriately implemented in consistent ways throughout the state.

Weaknesses

Resource Challenges

Insufficient funding limits the ability to take effective practices to scale and sustain them. Prospective participants' needs and demands for services have overwhelmed available resources and capacity of workforce programs and services across the state workforce system. Eligibility requirements can limit flexibility, innovation and responsiveness. As a result, some programs struggle to provide the optimal amount of assistance that customers may need. Individuals without work experience and/or poor educational achievement continue to have difficulty entering and competing in the CT workforce.

Two examples illustrate this challenge:

First, transportation consistently ranks as one of the two biggest barriers to enrolling in and completing postsecondary education for low-income Connecticut residents. The Connecticut Department of Transportation's U-Pass CT program allows students enrolled in credit-bearing programs at most Connecticut community colleges and state universities and at all UConn campuses to ride buses and trains on most public transit systems for free. Students enrolled in non-credit-bearing programs do not currently qualify for U-Pass CT, however. Given the strong evidence behind non-credit-bearing programs (e.g., the workforce pipeline model) as a high-return-on-investment tool for matching inexperienced workers to in-demand, good jobs, expanding the U-Pass CT program to pipeline participants and others enrolled in demand-driven, non-credit education and training programs would represent a low-cost investment that leverages the existing public transit and U-Pass CT infrastructure and promises an immediate benefit for workers and businesses.

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Participant Challenges

The very low literacy levels of many prospective participants of workforce programs – compounded by lack of work-readiness (“soft”) skills – limit prospects for career advancement and tax the capabilities of programs with limited resources. Many young people involved with the juvenile justice system are at-risk of future involvement with criminal justice system as adults. Criminal records are a practical impediment to employment for many individuals who aspire to productive careers.

System Challenges

Each of the State agencies engaged in Connecticut's workforce/talent-development efforts collects data and conducts analysis to support its priorities, investments and programs. However, the multiple systems are stand alone and do not interface with each other which hinder the ability to compile critical data and insight and bring together key sources of information to assess challenges and identify opportunities. Data sharing between agencies is not always available and does not allow for cumulative system outcome reporting.

C. State Workforce Development Capacity

Connecticut's capacity to implement proposed workforce development activities and provide coordinated, aligned, integrated, comprehensive workforce development programs and services to jobseekers, workers and employers is strong, and improving. Governor Lamont and the Governor's Workforce Council support a series of initiatives and investments to address Connecticut's workforce challenges, ranging from early childhood development, to strengthened career and technical education, to industry-specific enhancements in higher education, to focused training for targeted workers.

Likewise, the General Assembly has raised the broad workforce development, education and training agenda to a new level of attention and support through an array of investments in innovative programs. Many of these workforce development activities are described in the preceding section. Connecticut businesses and employers have increased their active support for and participation in numerous practical partnerships to help build the skills of the workers they need for their companies to prosper. The capacity of Connecticut's workforce system to meet the challenges ahead is manifest in numerous examples. At both State and regional/local levels, an array of sector-specific workforce partnerships are in place to prepare targeted jobseekers and incumbent workers to meet employers' needs. The statewide network of comprehensive American Job Centers and satellite offices provide accessible facilities and presence in key communities. The P20WIN longitudinal data system provides increasingly useful information to guide system investment strategies.

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

1. Vision

Core to Governor Lamont's vision for Connecticut is a nimble workforce ready to meet the needs of the 21st century economy. In October 2019, Governor Lamont signed Executive Order No. 4 elevating the State Workforce Board by directing it do business as the Governor's Workforce Council. That Council, through its chair, now serves as the Governor's principal advisor on workforce development issues and coordinates the efforts of all state agencies and other entities promoting workforce development. By breaking down silos within and outside of government and partnering with industry, philanthropy, and academia to meet and stay ahead of demand, the Council will ensure Connecticut has one of the most aligned, high-quality, and equitable workforce development systems in the country.

Connecticut's State Workforce Board has been operating under the Alternative Entity provisions of the federal Workforce Innovation Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act since 2000. Those provisions have allowed Connecticut to simultaneously implement the federal acts and abide by section 31-3i of the Connecticut General Statutes, which dictates the Board be composed of twenty-four members, a majority of whom represent business and industry, and the remainder of whom represent state and local governments, organized labor, education and community-based organizations, including a representative of a community action agency. For the last two decades, the U.S. Department of Labor has repeatedly approved that structure as each new Governor provided their workforce development vision and appointed leaders to the State Board.

In 2019, Governor Lamont decided to retain that grandfathered structure and appointed a slate of Board members that complies with section 31-3i and is substantially similar to the state board described in WIOA. The Board is now chaired by a strong business representative—Garrett Moran, a former president of Year-Up and chief operating officer at Blackstone—and includes three Fortune 500 CEOs, the CEO of Connecticut's largest private employer, , university presidents and public school superintendents, the Connecticut AFL-CIO president and 32BJ district director, elected officials, and experienced leaders of community-based organizations and of small and large companies in key industry sectors.

To ensure a cohesive, collaborative, ongoing, and meaningful role for other key membership groups, Governor Lamont also appointed twenty ex-officio Board members. Those ex-officio members include the Connecticut Commissioners of Labor, Aging and Disability Services, and Education, in addition to several others that are instrumental to WIOA administration in Connecticut. Ex-officio members attend all meetings of the Board and its relevant subcommittees, lead the work of several of those subcommittees, regularly consult with the Chair and other members, and provide input into the State Plan and policy development. Since the inception of planning for the Governor's Workforce Council, Governor Lamont and Chair Moran have reached out to many other stakeholders to engage their support and input for the new CT workforce strategy. They have hosted informational meetings with and visited businesses, state public and private universities and colleges, local workforce boards, non-profits, philanthropy, training programs, local schools, apprenticeships programs, chief elected officials, and border state Governors, all in an effort to be transparent, inform their knowledge of areas of concern and identify opportunities for future action.

Connecticut and the New England region are experiencing significant workforce shortages across numerous industries. Business and government need solutions that source untapped pools of talent to support the overall growth of our economy. Governor Lamont recognizes the importance of implementing a two-generational or whole-family approach to service delivery that provides workers with families with access to the training, education and work supports needed to sustain employment such as: quality child care, elder care, transportation, health, and housing. A Supportive Services committee of the Governor's Workforce Council has been created for this purpose to ensure that future program planning and policies recognize the needs of Connecticut families that have not achieved self-sufficiency.

By publicly communicating his vision and firmly supporting the Governor's Workforce Council, Governor Lamont has set a deliberate, robust workforce development strategy to address current and future business, workforce and education needs in Connecticut. Executive Order #4 states as follows:

WHEREAS, the State's workforce development system is made up of workforce training providers, educational institutions, economic development and human services agencies, labor unions, private employers, state and local governments, and other partners, all working together to serve students, job seekers, those currently employed, and employers; and

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut is, thanks to the efforts of those partners, a leader in workforce development; and

WHEREAS, high-quality workforce development opportunities are increasingly essential to maintaining our residents' world-class quality of life, ensuring their access to good jobs at good wages, supporting our strategic industry clusters, investing in and retaining our young entrepreneurs, and creating vibrant cities and towns where talented employees want to work, play, raise families, and contribute to their communities; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, since the 2008 recession, 99% of new jobs have required some postsecondary education, and, therefore, those with a high school diploma or less have been disadvantaged; and

WHEREAS, according to the McKinsey Global Institute, individuals without postsecondary credentials are four times more likely to be employed in highly automatable jobs than workers with a bachelor's degree or higher, and that members of racial minorities have a significantly higher probability that some or all of their current job functions will be automated; and

WHEREAS, a successful workforce development system depends upon collaboration, alignment, innovation, equity, performance accountability, and access to sufficient information and data, and a commitment to eliminating administrative and statutory barriers to success wherever possible; and

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut can improve outcomes for our state's workers, students, and businesses by creating a comprehensive vision and strategy for growing our economy through innovative, accessible, and easily navigable workforce programs;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, NED LAMONT, Governor of the State of Connecticut, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Connecticut Constitution and by the statutes of the State of Connecticut, do hereby ORDER AND DIRECT:

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), established pursuant to Section 31-3h of the Connecticut General Statutes, shall also be known as the Governor's Workforce Council.

1. The Governor's Workforce Council, through its chair, shall serve as the principal advisor to the Governor on workforce development issues and coordinate the efforts of all state agencies and other entities in promoting workforce development throughout the state.
2. In addition to the responsibilities of the CETC enumerated in federal and state law, the Governor's Workforce Council shall convene stakeholders, including businesses, state agencies, quasi-public and independent entities, boards, councils, and commissions, public and private education and training institutions, workforce development boards, non-profit institutions, labor unions, and the State's Chief Manufacturing Officer, to:
 3. Develop a sustainable framework for coordination among all stakeholders in the state's workforce development system, and report no later than January 1, 2020, and each year thereafter to the Governor and General Assembly about workforce coordination efforts and on how to further improve such coordination;
1. Support state agencies and municipalities in their efforts to recruit businesses to Connecticut, such as by facilitating new pathways and programs to create the necessary supply of workers;
 2. Develop recommendations on potential state and federal statutory reforms to support the continuous improvement of workforce development services;
 3. In compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, recommend an updated state plan for workforce development, which plan shall be submitted to the United States Department of Labor in March 2020, and review and recommend changes

to regional workforce development plans consistent with such state workforce development plan; and

4. Study the future of work and the resulting implications for Connecticut's workforce needs and opportunities and report on its findings to the Governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2022.

The Governor's Workforce Council shall review the state's workforce development system and report to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2021. The report shall identify the workforce needs in Connecticut and recommend ways to:

1. Emphasize data-driven outcomes, consistently measure outcomes across different programs and agencies, and improve labor market and programmatic data systems across state agencies;
2. Reduce the cost of education and training borne by individuals;
3. Improve the use of funds and resources under applicable state and federal programs;
4. Reduce barriers to higher education and quality workforce training with an emphasis on two-generational and whole-family approaches, including through wraparound services, mentoring, and career navigation and coaching;
5. Assist industry and labor in ongoing efforts to close racial and gender gaps in healthcare, education, building trades, STEM, and other fields;
6. Improve opportunities for work-based, credit-bearing and non-credit bearing learning such as internships, apprenticeships and project-based learning with workplace application. Increase access to portable and transferable dual-credit coursework in high schools;
7. Strengthen the bridge from high school into post-secondary training and education;
8. Increase emphasis on career readiness in our public schools and universities by strengthening and supporting teaching of essential employability skills and habits of mind for the 21st century workplace, such as teamwork, professionalism, adaptability, complex problem-solving, situational awareness, cultural competencies, and resilience;
9. Emphasize lifelong learning and provide opportunities for up-skilling to workers throughout their careers;
10. Support businesses in shifting from degree-based hiring requirements to a skills-based focus because skill-based hiring can address inequities and improve job matching;
11. Remove barriers for employers to engage as partners in the creation of a talent pipeline they need to be successful, such as train-to-hire and up-skilling initiatives for incumbent workers;
12. **Increase the speed of developing new courses and programs at state universities and colleges and other related educational institutions or workforce training providers in order to meet the needs of employers and to improve the labor market outcomes of graduates;**
13. Bring transparency to the credentials conferred by public higher education institutions by translating credentials wherever possible to the skills and competencies developed to attain those credentials;
14. Improve and standardize processes for enrollment, transfer, and credit for prior learning between and among training providers and educational institutions;
15. Retain skilled individuals within Connecticut; and
16. Introduce and mainstream best practices from academic research and from other cities, states, regions, and countries.
17. State agencies shall assist the Governor's Workforce Council as it conducts its review and makes its recommendations, including by providing it with all relevant information and data about agencies' workforce development programs and services, funding streams for these programs and services, and the outcomes of those programs and services. State agencies shall enact appropriate data-sharing agreements with one another and with the Governor's Workforce Council to facilitate such analysis.

Recommendations from the Governor's Workforce Council shall integrate public contributions, include all regions of the state, and focus on providing workforce opportunities for all of

Connecticut's workers, and, therefore, incorporate strategies to provide opportunities for people of any age, ancestry, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression, as well as to justice-involved persons, individuals with disabilities, military service members and veterans, immigrants and refugees.

The GWC will conduct a strategic analysis of Connecticut's workforce development system that includes an analysis of program funding, performance data, supply and demand, educational and training gaps. Governor Lamont asked the GWC to produce and deliver a strategic plan and recommendations to his office by January 2021. Therefore, Connecticut anticipates providing even more details on specific CT workforce strategies to the federal government in March 2021. The state remains confident that the new GWC committee and partner structure will guide Connecticut to meet this ambitious timetable.

The Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) held its first meeting on November 21, 2019 at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. GWC membership:

Governor's Workforce Council Members and Committee Structure
Council Members

Chairperson – Garrett Moran, Year Up, President (retired)
Vice Chairperson - Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Sound Manufacturing, CEO
Chris Swift, The Hartford, CEO
Cindi Bigelow, Bigelow Tea, CEO
Cliff Asness, AQR, Managing Principal
Dave O'Neill, Indeed, COO
Erika Smith, ReNetx, CEO
Jay Williams, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, President
Jim Loree, Stanley Black + Decker, CEO
Juan Hernandez, 32BJ SEIU, District Director and Vice President
Judy Olian, Quinnipiac University, President
Kevin Graney, Electric Boat, CEO
Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Hartford Public Schools, Superintendent
Margaret Keane, Synchrony, CEO
Marna Borgstrom, Yale New Haven Health, CEO
Monette Ferguson, ABCD Inc., Executive Director
Oni Chukwu, Aventri, CEO
Peter Bevacqua, NBC Sports, President
Peter Salovey, Yale University, President
Ravi Kumar, Infosys, President
Dr. Ruth Levy, Region 4 Schools, Superintendent (retired)
Sal Luciano, Connecticut AFL-CIO, President
Representative Toni Walker, CT House District 93
Senator Tony Hwang, CT Senate District 28

Ex-Officio Members

Amy Porter, Department of Aging and Disability, Commissioner
Beth Bye, Office of Early Childhood, Commissioner
Colin Cooper, Dept of Economic & Community Devel, Chief Manufacturing Officer,
David Lehman, Dept of Economic and Community Development, Commissioner
Deidre Gifford, Department of Social Services, Commissioner
Jeffrey Wihbey, Connecticut Technical High School System, Superintendent
Jennifer Widness, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, President
Josh Geballe, Department of Administrative Services, Commissioner
Jordan A Scheff, Department of Developmental Services, Commissioner
Kurt Westby, Department of Labor, Commissioner
Maria Pirro-Simmons, Dept of Correction Unified District #1, Superintendent of Schools
Mark Ojakian, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, President
Melissa McCaw, Office of Policy and Management, Secretary
Miguel Cardona, State Department of Education, Commissioner

Peter Denious, Connecticut Economic Resource Center, President and CEO
Scott Gaul, Office of Policy and Management, Chief Data Officer

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz

Timothy Larson, Office of Higher Education

Tom Katsouleas, University of Connecticut, President

Vannessa Dorantes, Department of Children and Families, Commissioner

Partner Committee Members

Alex Johnson, Capitol Workforce Partners, President & CEO

Bill Villano, Workforce Alliance, President & CEO

Cathy Awwad, Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, Executive Director

John Beauregard, Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, President and CEO

Joseph Carbone, The WorkPlace, President & CEO

Alice Pritchard, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, Chief of Staff

Social Venture Partners

Mark Argosh

Tom Robey

Sylvia Shepard

Patrick Hackett

Susan Adamsen

Courtney Fero

Shannon Marimon

Alysica Angus

Jennifer Gerber

Joe Smialowski

David Allon

Committees

VC = Vice Chair

SVP = Social Venture Partners

Manufacturing

Council Members, Business Leaders:

Jim Loree (Chair)

Kelli-Mari Vallieres (VC)

Kevin Graney

Other Members:

Sal Luciano

Ex-Officio Members:

Colin Cooper

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz

Jeff Whibey

Partner Committee Members:

John Beauregard Tom Robey (SVP)

Sylvia Shepard (SVP)

Healthcare + Bioscience

Council Members, Business Leaders:

Marna Borgstrom (Chair)

Erika Smith (VC)

Other Members:

Senator Tony Hwang

President Peter Salovey

Ex-Officio Members:

Kurt Westby (CAO)

David Lehman

Partner Committee Members:

Bill Villano

Patrick Hackett (SVP)

David Allon (SVP)

IT + Business Services

Council Members, Business Leaders:

Ravi Kumar (Chair)

Margaret Keane

Other Members:

President Judy Olian (VC)

Ex-Officio Members:

Josh Geballe (CAO)

Tim Larson

Partner Committee Members:

Alex Johnson

Susan Adamsen (SVP)

Joe Smialowski (SVP)

Data, Performance & Planning

Council Members, Business Leaders:

David O'Neill (Chair)

Cliff Asness

Other Members:

Representative Toni Walker

Jay Williams (VC)

Ex-Officio Members:

Scott Gaul

Kurt Westby

Josh Geballe

Partner Committee Members:

Mark Argosh (SVP)

Courtney Fero (SVP)

Education + Training:

Council Members, Business Leaders:

Chris Swift (Chair)

Peter Bevacqua

Other Members:

Leslie Torres-Rodriguez

Dr. Ruth Levy (VC)

Ex-Officio Members:

Mark Ojakian

Tom Katsouleas

Miguel Cardona

Maria Pirro-Simmons

Jennifer Widness

Partner Committee Members:

Cathy Awwad

Shannon Marimon (SVP)

Alysica Angus (SVP)

Alice Pritchard (CAO)

Supportive Services

Council Members, Business Leaders:

Oni Chukwu (Chair)

Cindi Bigelow (VC)

Other Members:

Juan Hernandez

Monette Ferguson

Ex-Officio Members:

Beth Bye (CAO)

Deidre Gifford

Amy Porter

Vannessa Dorantes

Jordan Scheff

Partner Committee Members:

Joe Carbone

Jennifer Gerber (SVP)

2.Goals

The Governor's Workforce Council serves as the principal advisor to the Governor on workforce development issues and coordinates the efforts of all state agencies and other entities in promoting workforce development throughout the state. The GWC is working to ensure that the statewide strategic vision not only exists, but is actively used to drive the Connecticut workforce system's goals, strategies, staff, partners, and decisions. Connecticut's growth more than ever depends upon fostering an innovative, entrepreneurial and inclusive economic environment in which its residents can build strong careers and businesses can find highly-skilled employees.

Through the Governor's Workforce Council, Connecticut is creating a comprehensive vision and strategy for growing its economy through innovative, accessible, and easily navigable workforce programs and a workforce development system that includes collaboration, alignment, innovation, equity, performance accountability, and access to sufficient information and data. This includes a commitment to eliminating administrative and statutory barriers to success wherever possible and the improvement of outcomes for the state's workers, students, and businesses.

ADS Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Connecticut's Department of Aging and Disability Services has adopted a complimentary set of strategies reflecting a commitment to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through the provision of vocational rehabilitation and support employment services. Details are available in the distinct plans for each of the Department's Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs included in the Unified State Plan.

Goal A: Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Goal B: Provide coordinated services to students with disabilities to prepare for careers and postsecondary education after exit from high school.

Goal C: Utilize Innovation and Expansion authority to identify services that can benefit groups of individuals with disabilities to increase access to career information, adaptive technology, and credential attainment.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Two Senior Community Service Employment Program grants, administered by the Department of Aging and Disability Services and The WorkPlace, under Title V of the Older Americans Act, allow the state to serve low-income, unemployed individuals, ages 55 and older, statewide. Funded through the United States Department of Labor, SCSEP is the only federal workforce development program designed to serve older workers exclusively.

Program participants receive subsidized on the job training with local non-profit agencies. In doing so, they receive valued skills training and serve the community. SCSEP also provides participants resources to address barriers to finding and retaining employment and job development. Through these actions, SCSEP participants gain valuable experience and skills needed to gain employment outside of the program.

In 2019, CT ranked 14th in states with highest percentage of persons aged 65 or older. In addition to preparing to replace retiring workers, industries will need to make adjustments to accommodate older workers. Healthcare and Social Assistance is the largest sector in the state overall, and employs the most workers over 54, with over 71,000. This sector has had the largest total increase of over 54 workers, up 20,000 since 2008. Training programs are needed at all levels in CT to upskill workers to respond to

technology changes and to retrain those who become unemployed. Older workers often pursue training in Healthcare, Manufacturing and IT.

CT has two main workforce development programs that provide additional tailored services to older workers:

1. Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

A Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) funded by the U.S. Department of Labor under Title V of the Older Americans Act enables the provision of job skills training to low-income Individuals, age 55 and older. SCSEP participants are placed in temporary training assignments where they receive valuable on-the-job work experience and training needed to gain meaningful employment. Participants will work 20 hours a week at the training sites for which they will be paid minimum wage.

Program goals include:

- assisting participants in acquiring marketable jobs skills;
- helping participants secure meaningful unsubsidized employment program objectives;
- participating in community service assignments to learn new skills in on the job training;
- assisting participants with résumé development;
- assisting in developing job search skills;
- increasing opportunities to obtain jobs in the private sector;
- referring participants to supportive services as needed; and
- changing stereotypes about older workers through public education and demonstrated success

1. Platform to Employment

The Platform to Employment (P2E) program was launched by The WorkPlace to assist the long-term unemployed (which consist of a large percentage of older workers) return to work while addressing employers' needs to recruit skilled workers. P2E provides businesses a risk-free opportunity to evaluate and consider hiring qualified participants in a work experience program. P2E supports individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits and remain unemployed.

Participants engage in a structured preparatory program including skills assessment, career readiness workshops, employee assistance services, coaching and other supports. Upon completion, participants are helped to find open positions at local companies. Placements occur on a trial basis and are subsidized over an eight-week period. The expectation is that a company satisfied with a candidate's performance will offer a full-time job.

The Connecticut General Assembly continues to fund P2E on a statewide basis with classes held in Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Haven, Hartford and the Norwich/New London areas. P2E's success is unparalleled. Nearly 80% of Connecticut participants who complete the preparatory program take the next step into a paid work experience with local companies. Of this population, nearly 90 percent have successfully moved to employer payrolls with average annual earning at placement in excess of \$50,000.

Goal A: Provide coordinated job skills training and supportive services to prepare participants for employment in growing labor markets.

Goal B: Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals in SCSEP.

3. Performance Goals

Per Executive Order Number 4 signed by Governor Lamont in October, 2019, the Governor's Workforce Council is tasked with conducting an analysis of Connecticut's workforce system and producing a comprehensive report for improvements to be made such that the state closes its skills and credentials gaps, employers can more easily find the talent they need to grow, and

that all residents, no matter their circumstances, will have access to high-quality job-training that is aligned to the needs of the economy. The Council is currently in the process of producing their report, which will be presented to the Governor and the Legislature no later than January 1st, 2021.

The Governor's Workforce Council will work with state agencies (DOL, DSS, DCF, OEC, DDS, CSDE, ADS, DMHAS, etc.) to ensure different workforce related funds are streamlined and providing the intended outcomes to the target populations. The GWC is also setting new goals and developing metrics to assess programs through its' committee work and analysis of data. CT plans to improve on the methods of overall performance tracking of programs and progress towards goals. The GWC Data Performance and Planning Committee is currently working on this issue and the work is described in section III. b. 6. A. ii.

4. Assessment

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Performance and Accountability Unit and WIOA Administration Unit, in collaboration with colleagues in comparable functions at ADS and CSDE, anticipate the development and maintenance of a dashboard tool to capture and summarize selected data concerning program effectiveness and the aggregate impact of Connecticut's workforce system in addressing the vision, goals, and principles described above.

Broad measures to be reviewed regularly will include:

Business engagement and delivering value to business/employer customers.

1. Measurable skills development in terms of educational attainment and workforce credentials that matter to Connecticut businesses.
2. Securing jobs in demand occupations showing promise for long-term growth in industry sectors valuable to Connecticut's economic expansion.
3. Earned wages that help jobseekers and workers attain financial security and demonstrate career advancement.
4. Workforce system investments that generate a quality return.

C. STATE STRATEGY

Economic development is most effective when approached with a clear vision, an eye for long-term stability and growth, and a strong plan of execution. While the state needs to continue to manage its finances responsibly and to streamline government, it must also make the required investments to move our economy forward and innovate in ways that will benefit all Connecticut residents.

As mentioned, key components of Governor Lamont's vision to transform the state's economic development strategy include aggressive business recruitment, collaborative work across agencies to better support existing businesses and onboard new ones, as well as a strategic and long-term economic policy focus, including in the important area of opportunity zones.

Led by the State of Connecticut's Office of Workforce Competitiveness, the State agencies responsible for administration of the core WIOA programs encompassed by this Unified State Plan (Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), and the five Workforce Development Boards propose and will support a set of broadly-conceived strategies intended to achieve the vision and goals. These strategies will serve as a framework for Connecticut's implementation efforts, with corresponding detailed State and local implementing actions to be developed.

1. The State will be implementing new strategies this year following the signing of Governor Lamont's Executive Order #4 in October 2019. The newly formed GWC and six committees will be focused on establishing a cohesive industry sector and career pathway strategy for CT.

Furthermore, this selection from the EO#4 establishes the GWC's charge:

The Governor's Workforce Council shall review the state's workforce development system and report to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2021. The report shall identify the workforce needs in Connecticut and recommend ways to:

1. Emphasize data-driven outcomes, consistently measure outcomes across different programs and agencies, and improve labor market and programmatic data systems across state agencies;
2. Reduce the cost of education and training borne by individuals;
3. Improve the use of funds and resources under applicable state and federal programs;
4. Reduce barriers to higher education and quality workforce training with an emphasis on two-generational and whole-family approaches, including through wraparound services, mentoring, and career navigation and coaching;
5. Assist industry and labor in ongoing efforts to close racial and gender gaps in healthcare, education, building trades, STEM, and other fields;
6. Improve opportunities for work-based, credit-bearing and non-credit bearing learning such as internships, apprenticeships and project-based learning with workplace application. Increase access to portable and transferable dual-credit coursework in high schools;
7. Strengthen the bridge from high school into post-secondary training and education;
8. Increase emphasis on career readiness in our public schools and universities by strengthening and supporting teaching of essential employability skills and habits of mind for the 21st century workplace, such as teamwork, professionalism, adaptability, complex problem-solving, situational awareness, cultural competencies, and resilience;
9. Emphasize lifelong learning and provide opportunities for up-skilling to workers throughout their careers;
10. Support businesses in shifting from degree-based hiring requirements to a skills-based focus because skill-based hiring can address inequities and improve job matching;
11. Remove barriers for employers to engage as partners in the creation of a talent pipeline they need to be successful, such as train-to-hire and up-skilling initiatives for incumbent workers;
12. **Increase the speed of developing new courses and programs at state universities and colleges and other related educational institutions or workforce training providers in order to meet the needs of employers and to improve the labor market outcomes of graduates;**
13. Bring transparency to the credentials conferred by public higher education institutions by translating credentials wherever possible to the skills and competencies developed to attain those credentials;
14. Improve and standardize processes for enrollment, transfer, and credit for prior learning between and among training providers and educational institutions;
15. Retain skilled individuals within Connecticut; and
16. Introduce and mainstream best practices from academic research and from other cities, states, regions, and countries.

2. Core Programs

Representatives of State agencies responsible for administering core WIOA programs (CTDOL, ADS and CSDE) joined by representatives of other critical workforce system collaborators and stakeholders will participate in ongoing integrated State and local-level monitoring and oversight to identify gaps to be addressed and opportunities for effective program and resource alignment. Lead responsibility to review and assure alignment of programs and resources falls to the Governor's Workforce Council. The Connecticut Department of Labor's Performance and Accountability Unit and Office of Research are charged with system performance review to ensure value and productivity of investments, analyze labor market information to identify gaps, needs and opportunities for innovation and improvement, and provide insight and guidance to the Governor's Workforce Council on appropriate actions.

CT has embraced the Two-Generational (2Gen)/Whole Family Approach to service delivery, where possible, that focuses on creating opportunities for and addressing the needs of both children and adults together so that children and families get the education, workforce training,

and social supports they need to reach their full potential and contribute to Connecticut's growth.

2Gen requires the workforce system to innovate — collaborating across agencies and sectors in new ways, sharing data, leveraging existing resources to drive down costs and promoting economic success for the whole family. Connecticut's 2Gen approach strives to provide a stable workforce to Connecticut's economy and healthy children who are ready to thrive. This work is developed and supported by the public sector, the private sector, including nonprofits, philanthropy, academia, business, and parents.

In 2015, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to enact a 2Gen initiative in statute.[1] The statute established what is now the 2Gen Advisory Board.[2] The bipartisan, statewide 2Gen Advisory Board brings together the executive, legislative, and judicial branch, along with the private sector and parents, to advise the state on the 2Gen approach. Three action-oriented work groups of the 2Gen Advisory Board, focused on parent engagement, workforce, and benefits cliffs, and work collaboratively to develop solutions that promote family economic success.

The 2Gen Advisory Board work groups are cross-sections of the Board, whose membership includes various agencies and branches of government, the public and private sector, and parents. Each group is staffed by the Statewide 2Gen Coordinator, designated "leads" from the 2Gen Advisory Board, and a technical consultant through the regional "Whole Family Approach to Jobs project," focused on improving whole family policy and practice in New England.[3] The Governor's Office and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) are active members of the Benefits Cliffs and Workforce work groups, with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston engaged in a consulting capacity. The 2Gen Workforce Work Group developed the below recommendations for Connecticut's 4-year workforce development strategy:

. Prioritize expanding local partnerships with human service agencies to better support parents engaging in workforce development. This could include: surveying parents to identify barriers to fully participating in the labor force; creating local maps of services (including child care, after school, transportation routes) as well as a resource map of work supports (Husky, child care, emergency vouchers); and establishing a coordinated network of service providers beyond mandated partners (but inclusive of them). The network should have regular information sharing meetings at the local level so that staff are aware of services and are able to make warm referrals. Coordination at the local level should have a goal of routinely identifying policy barriers to coordination and lifting them to the state level for resolution as necessary.

- Amend the state's SNAP Employment and Training Plan (SNAP E&T) to augment case management and utilize a portion of SNAP E&T 50/50 reimbursement for supportive services for emergency needs. E.g. Colorado's *Creating a Pilot Program for Emergency Employment Support Services* (HB 19 – 1107).
- Train WIOA front line staff in family-centered coaching and benefits cliff counseling, which may include bettering connect families with resources for making career decisions in light of the cliff effect.
- Identify 2-3 key metrics that would help local workforce boards and the state assess barriers for workers with families to workforce participation and include them in the state data system.

Survey employers for non-standard work hours (outside M-F, daytime) and identify gaps in child care services and transportation in coordination with OEC and DOT, and establish a plan for meeting employer and parent needs.

- Utilize the one-stop career centers as "hubs" of information and resources both in web-based platforms and as locations known for a set of coordinated services for families.
-

In 2017 statute designated the Office of Early Childhood as the lead coordinating agency for 2Gen in the executive branch. In 2018, a statewide 2Gen Coordinator position

was developed, now based out of the Office of Early Childhood. The Office of Early Childhood has led in cross-agency data sharing, smoothing cliffs in its benefits programs, incentivizing whole family approaches in its home visiting programs, and partnering with academia to pilot innovative 2Gen research projects that link child care and workforce.

2Gen workforce development practices are informing workforce policy in Connecticut. Through OEC and through other philanthropically-funded initiatives, best practices have been implemented at the community-level. The following are examples of community-level 2Gen efforts related to a whole family approach to workforce:

- **SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) and Child Care:** OEC is partnering with CSCU to offer families the opportunity to receive child care funding to support their enrollment in and completion of a SNAP E&T certificate. SNAP E&T participants with young children will receive a subsidy to pay for child care for both class and study time. OEC will pilot this project starting January 2020 at two colleges to stress test the procedure, measure the success of completion when child care is identified and child care costs are provided, and develop a protocol to provide this to a broader SNAP E&T population in spring 2020, where early childhood and manufacturing higher education programs will be included.
- **The total sample size for FY20 is an estimated 160 participants.** Under federal SNAP E&T rules, child care is considered a supportive service. All supportive service expenses offered to SNAP E&T participants are eligible for a 50% reimbursement by the federal government. Therefore, the state will draw down federal resources as it invests in child care for this population.
- **Bristol Manufacturing and Child Care:** Due to a growing labor shortage within area manufacturers, the leadership of Bristol Adult Education and Rowley Spring and Stamping, a local manufacturer, created a partnership in 2013 to train adults for a career in manufacturing, calling it the Adult Education Diploma and Certification (AEDAC) program. Upon completion of the program, participants qualify for jobs where they can earn livable wages and access full benefits. In 2019, OEC, the University of Connecticut, and Bristol Adult Education partnered to recruit, implement and evaluate the AEDAC, targeting parents with a child under age 6 by offering free on-site child care. By mitigating the child care barrier, parents with young children have the opportunity to complete the 12-week program and ultimately earn a higher wage for their family. UConn is evaluating the project on measures of program attendance and completion, job placement, future earnings, as well as key family stability indicators.
- **Adult Education and Child Care:** OEC is investing in a small-scale demonstration project at four adult education centers that will provide on-site child care to a cohort of students enrolled in adult education courses, with the goal of increasing enrollment, retention and graduation among families with young children. The communities of Bristol, Danbury, New London and Vernon served 42 families with 58 children in spring 2019. An estimated 52 families were served in the fall 2019 semester. OEC, University of Connecticut, and the State Department of Education developed this project after many conversations with parents and adult education providers who consistently cited child care as a major barrier to enrollment and completion. In addition to the anecdotal feedback we received, recent literature supports the linkage of child care and other support services to increase family economic mobility. UConn is measuring outcomes: attendance, retention and graduation, along with family stability, community connections, receipt of supportive services, and other key family indicators.

- Meriden Family Resource Centers (FRC): Developed partnerships with Meriden Adult Education and other workforce development agencies so that the FRCs can become a single point of entry for many supportive services. Meriden FRCs also incorporated a coaching model that takes a strength-based approach and long-term family success planning.
- Norwalk's Maritime Odyssey Preschool: Developed a cohort of parents who received training in Early Childhood Education provision throughout the year. Parents were supported by free child care and stipends paid for by CAHS and OEC. Parents received a Child Development Associate credential at the end of the year, are then employed by Maritime when possible, and offered the opportunity to continue to college towards higher levels of teacher certification.
- Connecticut Working Cities Challenge cities: Danbury, Hartford, East Hartford, Middletown, and Waterbury, were funded by a three-year grant administered by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to engage in cross-sector, collaborative leadership, driven by data and family engagement, to spur workforce development and job-creation in low-income neighborhoods. While not originally marketed as a 2Gen cohort, the cities have discovered in the design phase that their economic improvement initiatives necessitate a whole family approach.
- Secure Jobs Connecticut: In 2015, twenty-five private funders and the Department of Housing spearheaded Secure Jobs Connecticut, a three-year pilot designed to increase the income of families transitioning from homelessness to housing by connecting them to the education, training, and the supports they needed to secure and maintain employment. Four strategies helped to bridge the gap between the housing and workforce systems at the local level: utilization of a Secure Jobs navigator, network-building beyond housing and workforce organizations, case conferencing which included stakeholders from different organizations who focused on solutions for the whole family, and flexible dollars used to immediately remove individual barriers to employment, such as bus passes and childcare. A majority of clients (60%) were enrolled in at least one of the two major funding sources for workforce services: WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) and JFES (Jobs First Employment Services). The Secure Jobs pilot resulted in increases in the number of parents (59%) working and an increase in their wages. However, at an average of \$11.74/hour those wages were not high enough for the families to make ends meet. In Connecticut, the hourly wage needed to afford a typical 2-bedroom apartment is \$24.72. Connecticut philanthropy launched Secure Jobs 2.0 in October 2019 and added creating a clearer pathway to help families obtain higher wages jobs by way of systems change that centers on improvements of access, speed, responsiveness and effectiveness of service delivery within and across organizations. Department of Labor staff have been a key partner not only in providing leadership to the pilot but also on-the-ground assistance to local communities.

Board of Regents for Higher Education

The Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) is the governing board for the Connecticut State College and University (CSCU) System. The CSCU System is comprised of 17 public institutions of higher education, including 12 community colleges, four state universities, and one online degree-granting institution.

The mission of CSCU is to contribute to the creation of knowledge and the economic growth of the state of Connecticut by providing affordable, innovative, and rigorous programs. CSCU's learning environments transform students and help individuals achieve their personal and career goals.

The statutory responsibility of the 17 institutions that make up the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities is to provide access to quality and affordable higher education to the people of the state of Connecticut. The BOR is charged with setting policies to carry out that responsibility while aligning with the following goals:

- to ensure that no qualified person be denied the opportunity for higher education on the basis of age, sex, gender identity or expression, ethnic background or social, physical or economic condition,
- to protect academic freedom,
- to provide opportunities for education and training related to the economic, cultural and educational development of the state,
- to assure the fullest possible use of available resources in public and private institutions of higher education,
- to maintain standards of quality ensuring a position of national leadership for state institutions of higher education,
- to apply the resources of higher education to the problems of society, and
- to foster flexibility in the policies and institutions of higher education to enable the system to respond to changes in the economy, society, technology and student interests

CSCU educates more students than any other institution in Connecticut. The size, geographic reach, and diversity of programs and talent give CSCU the flexibility and scalability to be an essential partner in any initiative that drives economic growth and the continued professional and personal growth of Connecticut residents. For students and taxpayers alike, CSCU represents a phenomenal return on investment. For every dollar students invest in their education, they will garner \$6.60 in higher future earnings, with an average annual rate of return of 22.2%. For every \$1 of public funding in CSCU, the state will receive \$3.80 in added tax revenue and public sector savings.

As of the fall 2018 semester, CSCU serves more than 140,000 noncredit, certificate-seeking, undergraduate, and graduate students in hundreds of academic fields, with credentials ranging from manufacturing technology, cyber security, and allied health, nursing, education, and social work. Ninety- five percent of these students are current Connecticut residents who are building their futures in the state. CSCU educates 40 percent of all the higher education students and 68 percent of all public higher education students in Connecticut. In the last two decades, CSCU institutions have conferred over 260,000 degrees and certificates.

Improvements and Achievements for Fiscal Year 2019

- Students First, CSCU's long-term strategy to improve student outcomes and fiscal sustainability is well underway. It will unify the existing 12 community colleges into a single accredited institution – maintaining access to all current campuses and satellites – while implementing a Guided Pathways approach to improve student success.
- CSCU announced the “Team Works” Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Development Strategic Plan, developed collaboratively with stakeholders across education, government and industry. CSCU's advanced manufacturing centers and programs at the community colleges are prepared to address the state's need for a skilled workforce and are collaborating with the Workforce Development Boards to fill the manufacturing pipeline.
- The BOR voted to make the institutional aid application available for undocumented students.
- CSCU was awarded a number of grants, including from the Lumina Foundation for \$291,300 to fund an adult learner policy; Third Sector selected CSCU to receive training and assistance in leveraging innovative financing to fund wraparound support services

to students; the United States Department of Labor awarded CSCU \$8 million to build upon successful Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship programs; the United States Department of Education awarded CSCU a \$25.8 million GEAR UP grant that will assist the state in its efforts to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education

- Today, community college graduates automatically gain acceptance and seamlessly transfer their credits in more than 25 concentrations toward a four-year degree, potentially saving students thousands of dollars in the process of attaining a world-class degree. Seeing the success of the TAP program between CSCU institutions, several private universities have now signed up to participate.
- CSCU institutionalized the partnership with the Department of Social Services and is now the second community college system in the country to provide workforce education to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients.
- All CSCU schools are engaging female students and students from underrepresented populations in programming to peak their interest and pursuit of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). These efforts bring in partners from the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Connecticut Science Center, local school districts and other organizations to promote access and equity.
- The state universities, through partnerships with local K-12 school systems, tackles these issues head on, working together to address the equity gap early and better preparing students, regardless of their backgrounds, for the rigors of a college education.
- CSCU collaborated with the State Department of Transportation to offer the UPass program, giving students unlimited public transportation for a fee of just \$20 per semester. For the current semester, CSCU has made 60,000 passes available to students at all the participating institutions.

CSCU's Challenges

- The single greatest challenge facing CSCU has been insufficient funding to make the critical investments those students and institutions need to thrive. The lack of funding is driven by two distinct factors: diminishing state support and declining enrollment.
- Successive years of budget cuts since 2015, as well as rescissions, lapses, and holdbacks, have reduced CSCU's state appropriations from \$351.99M to \$286.23M, a 19% reduction. These budget cuts are compounded by a 9% reduction in enrollment overall since 2013, and the associated loss of tuition and fee revenues.
- CSCU provides affordable and accessible learning to students no matter how much they or their families earn. A large number of students require assistance from state or federal financial aid to pursue an education. In 2017, 48% of community college students and 35% of university students received a Pell grant. More than 8,000 students receive nearly \$20M in Roberta B. Willis Scholarship awards from the state annually.
- Despite these resources, more and more students and their families, particularly at the university level, are taking on significant debt to finance their educations. Narrowing attainment gaps and increasing completion rates will depend on making college affordable, providing necessary supports, and offering flexible schedules and more online options for working adult students. Understanding the challenges students face will help policymakers identify the resources and policies needed to help them overcome barriers to completion.
- CSCU has already taken decisive steps, through Students First, to ensure that the promise of community college is there for future generations of Connecticut residents. Out of necessity, institutions have had to find new ways of educating and serving students with ever-diminishing resources. This has required fundamentally rethinking the way CSCU delivers instruction and services, manages resources, and governs institutions.

WIOA Related Policy and Funding Solutions

CSCU has identified a number of innovative solutions to the challenges the system faces which align with the WIOA system. Implementing any of these will require additional resources from policymakers.

- Partnerships with K-12—expanding pathways from high school is essential for Connecticut to reach its goal of increasing college completion rates, closing the achievement gap, and increasing high school student engagement.
- Partnerships with Business—CSCU has been dedicated to addressing the needs of business and industry for a skilled workforce. The state can help to meet employer demand by partnering to promote internships or apprenticeships for Connecticut college students and graduates. Early exposure to employment opportunities while in higher education programs can help students and businesses to see their future in Connecticut. CSCU colleges and universities can also address the incumbent worker training needs of the state's small and mid-sized employers.

Moving Forward

Access and affordability remain paramount to CSCU's mission. Connecticut cannot continue to ask students and their families to absorb the cost of budget deficits. As enrollment challenges have hit nearly every institution in our system, CSCU has worked to better coordinate enrollment and marketing strategies. The system is exploring ways to attract more nontraditional students like adult learners with flexible schedules. And CSCU institutions are making progress on better outreach to school counselors and other K-12 groups across the state.

The BOR will continue to pursue structural changes for the future and will accelerate efforts in the coming year. Every day, CSCU institutions collaborate with local communities and businesses to produce not just the next generation of Connecticut's workforce but the leaders and informed citizens needed for the future of Connecticut.

In the 2019 session of the Connecticut General Assembly, Public Act 19-117 was passed including the establishment of a last-dollar scholarship program intended to ensure that Connecticut high school graduates who are attending college for the first time will be able to attend a Connecticut community college without any out-of-pocket charges for tuition or mandatory fees. The Board of Regents has established policies related to the implementation of PACT, the Pledge to Advance Connecticut:

- PACT will provide grants to eligible community college students that, when combined with other available financial aid, will reduce the cost of tuition and fees to \$0.
- The program will begin in the fall of 2020.
- Generally, eligible students must graduate from a Connecticut high school and reside in Connecticut, complete a federal financial aid application, enroll for 12 credits or more for both the fall and winter/spring semesters, and meet Satisfactory Academic Progress.
- Eligibility for assistance under PACT continues for three years from initial participation, for up to 72 credit hours, provided that students maintain eligibility.
- Provisions are made for students with disabilities and for appeals.

The proposed policy has been crafted to meet the requirements of the law while aligning administratively with other forms of financial assistance that are already offered by the colleges. Projections for the cost of the program range from \$7 million to \$15 million per year. The statute requires the state to identify a funding source during the 2020 legislative session. In the event that insufficient resources are made available to CSCU, the program is designed to allow for pro-rating of grants or awarding on a first-come-first-served basis. There is no requirement in the law or the proposed policy that CSCU dedicate existing state appropriations or tuition revenue to this program.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 4 sets expectations and requirements for the Governor's Workforce Council. The Council and its Chair will take a lead role in advising the governor on the state's workforce development strategy and supporting the state's economic growth.

The Council will also coordinate among the important stakeholders in the workforce system, including businesses, state agencies, quasi-public and independent entities, boards, councils, and commissions, public and private education and training institutions, workforce development boards, nonprofit institutions, labor unions, and the state's Chief Manufacturing Officer.

Also, please refer to Section II.b above.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

The CTDOL WIOA Administration Unit administers the WIOA Title 1B funding for CT's workforce development system which includes three of the core required partner programs – Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth. The administration of the funds includes but is not limited to the following functions; policy and procedure development, monitoring – both programmatically and fiscally, development of grants and contracts, reporting, and management information system support.

Through these functions, CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit is able to assist with the strategies and alignment of the core program activities of WIOA Title 1B with other required and non-required partner programs in the American Job Center network. This is accomplished through various means including the assignment of liaisons to the workforce development boards (WDBs) who have regular communication with the staff at the WDB and who also attend regularly scheduled meetings of the WDBs in order to keep abreast of their planning, priorities, policies and strategies for the ensuring that a full complement of programs and services are available to the job seekers and employers in the region. Technical assistance is also provided through regular meetings of the WIOA Administration Unit with the WDBs on various WIOA Title 1B topics including the negotiations of service delivery by and through required and non-required partner programs; ensuring MOUs and appropriate cost sharing mechanisms are in place. Co-enrollment is a specific target of these efforts as well, with significant progress being made with regard to the co-enrollment of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) participants in the WIOA Title 1B program for Dislocated Workers. The intent moving forward is to replicate the successful attributes of this work to increase co-enrollment across programs whenever appropriate. These combined efforts serve to lead and strengthen the commitments of the required partner and non-required partner programs in meeting the goals and objectives as outlined in the state's strategy in II(c) above. Core WIOA program activities in Connecticut will be aligned as partners build upon existing inter-agency relationships and program collaborations.

American Job Centers (AJC) Customer Flow:

- Walk-in customers at comprehensive American Job Centers will be greeted at the main reception desk by a team of CTDOL and/or WDB partner staff, as front desk coverage will be a shared responsibility between the two partners.

CTDOL will provide Unemployment Insurance staff experts at affiliate and comprehensive offices to answer Reemployment and Unemployment Insurance-related inquiries from customers.

- Generally, the Career Centers in each comprehensive American Job Center are staffed jointly by CTDOL and WDB staff (with the exception of Hamden/New Haven), with each

partner committed to assigning a minimum of one staff member on a full time basis.

- When a job seeker enters an American Job Center seeking services, the AJC staff will first determine whether or not the customer is registered in the CTHires system, which is used to track the services provided to each job seeker. If the customer is not registered, he or she will be guided to a computer and asked to complete the CTHires customer registration. If the customer needs assistance in completing the registration process, staff assistance will be provided.
- American Job Center customers are provided with some form of orientation to the employment services that are available to them through all the various partners. Job Center staff discuss the customer's job search plans and provides customers with the opportunity to sign up for employment readiness core workshops, such as Successful Job Search Strategies, Interviewing Strategies and Techniques, and Fundamentals of Resume Writing. Additional workshops are available depending on the region. If the customer needs one-on-one job search assistance, career counseling, or a resume critique, every effort will be made to provide that service. If the customer is interested in self-service activities, s/he can utilize CTHires to conduct job searches, post a resume, or access online courses, and visit AJC Career Centers for access to computers, fax machines, copiers, resume paper, and free postage for mailing applications and resumes. Customers will also be informed about the various services available under WIOA.
- Customers who self-identify as veterans or eligible spouses will be assessed for significant barriers to employment and other characteristics that qualify for one-on-one job search assistance from a CTDOL Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist. Jobseekers with a self-disclosed disability may be referred to either a Disability Program Navigator or Disability Employment Initiative representative (depending on region). Jobseekers with disabilities may also be referred to ADS for service. All customers have the option of accessing the universal services available to everyone in the center.
- Staff is assigned to each of the career centers in the comprehensive American Job Centers to support and assist jobseekers in whatever way needed. Jobseekers needing to improve computer skills will be referred to a computer skills workshop or drop-in computer skills classroom to work on developing or enhancing their computer skills.
- Customers interested in WIOA services will be connected to the appropriate WIOA representative or WIOA information session.
- All American Job Center (AJC) customers will be asked if they are receiving public assistance benefits (i.e. TANF, SNAP, HUSKY, Care 4 Kids) and referred to the appropriate WIOA service entity to assist with any special needs beyond those offered by the AJC. Such referrals will be documented and outcomes noted.

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) services and WDB Title I services have been co-located wherever/whenever possible with Title II/Adult Education and Title IV/Vocational Rehabilitation Services. It is understood that space availability and cost may be barriers to achieving the objective of co-location with Adult Education, but the two Vocational Rehabilitation programs of ADS have been successful in achieving a model of part-time co-location in each of the WDB regions. If/where co-location is not feasible, all staff in each of the comprehensive American Job Centers will be trained to become familiar with services provided by Adult Education and ADS and be able to make

an intelligent, informed decision about when to refer a customer to one of these agencies. In turn, all staff at Adult Education and ADS has been trained to become familiar with the services available at the American Job Centers across Connecticut, capable of making referrals to those Job Centers for any customer.

The American Job Centers are hubs from which jobseekers can be referred to sector-focused programs in targeted sectors such as Manufacturing, Health Care or Construction. Job Developers from organizations like ADS have joined the Regional Business Service teams in each region.

American Job Center staff will be familiar with these targeted sector grants and programs in each region and capable of making informed referrals to them. In some situations, targeted sector program staff may be co-located at an American Job Center. Accessible printed program information is made available to jobseekers.

The regional WDBs deliver Adult and Dislocated Worker program activities through the American Job Center system via comprehensive and affiliate centers. Career services are provided to a wide range of jobseekers, with specialty programs directed to returning veterans and individuals with disabilities. Services include career coaching, guidance on job search techniques, skill and interest assessments, advice and support through peer groups, individual employment planning, and job development and placement. Occupational training is provided through access to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Business Services Teams engage employers and provide recruitment and hiring assistance, as well as access to an array of training resources for incumbent workers and new hires.

Priority of Service

Section 134(c)(3)(E) of WIOA establishes a priority requirement with respect to funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities. Under this section, one-stop center staff responsible for these funds must give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services. Under WIA, priority was required to be given to public assistance recipients and low-income individuals when States and local areas determined that allocated funds were limited. Under WIOA, priority must be provided regardless of the level of funds. WIOA also expanded the priority to include individuals who are basic skills deficient as defined in WIOA section 3(5).

Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all DOL-funded training programs, which include WIOA programs. However, when programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a particular group of individuals, such as the WIOA priority described above, priority must be provided in the following order:

- First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
- Second, to non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
- Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.
- Fourth, to any other populations that may be identified by the Governor or Local Board for priority.
- Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA.

Local areas established written policies and procedures to ensure priority for the populations described above for participants served in the WIOA Adult program.

CTDOL-Administered Services

WIOA Title 1 and Wagner-Peyser services are available through Connecticut's affiliate and comprehensive *American Job Centers*. CTDOL will provide the following services:

Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange: Under the Wagner-Peyser Act, CTDOL Employment Services (ES) receives federal funding to provide universal access to an integrated array of employment-related labor exchange services, including job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for jobseekers, reemployment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services to businesses with posted job openings.

During the last program year a total of 35,352 Wagner-Peyser customers benefited from employment services, including: assistance with career choices and job searches; workshops on résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration; information about specific companies and labor market trends; and, one-on-one career counseling. An additional 4,347 individuals received résumé services at CTDOL-sponsored events and in the AJC centers. Staff with board-certified credentials from the Professional Association of Résumé Writers provided resume preparation services. CTDOL meets the reemployment needs of many UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program, which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX). Selected claimants report for services in the Bridgeport, Hamden, Hartford, Montville and Waterbury American Job Centers. DOL's RESEA program design includes an increased UI presence in the AJCs and the extensive involvement of UI staff. Specifically, each RESEA customer meets one-on-one with a UI expert to discuss the rights and responsibilities of the unemployment insurance program. Ongoing staff training includes an emphasis on enhancing the skills needed to assist claimants with their reemployment efforts; RESEA program representatives have been trained to effectively access labor market information specific to a claimant's job skills and employment prospects, develop a reemployment plan to meet the claimant's needs and determine appropriate referrals to reemployment services or training. CTDOL completed more than 9,000 initial RESEAs during the 12-month period ending December 31, 2018.

Each RESEA must include the following minimum components to serve the needs of the claimant.

- UI eligibility assessment and referral to adjudication, as appropriate, if an issue or potential issue(s) is identified;
- Requirement for the claimant to report to an AJC;
- Orientation to AJC services;
- The provision of labor market and career information that addresses the claimant's specific needs;
- Registration with the state's job bank;
- Enrollment in Wagner-Peyser funded Employment Services;
- Development or revision of an individual reemployment plan that includes work search activities, accessing services provided through an AJC or using self-service tools, and/or approved training to which the claimant acknowledges agreement; and
- The individual reemployment plan must contain a referral to at least one mandatory reemployment service and/or training.

In June of 2019, CTDOL received a Fidelity Bonding Demonstration Grant to help persons with criminal records, including ex-offenders recovering from opioid and other drug addictions obtain employment. These bonds provided to employers will help to reduce the risk of hiring individuals whose criminal backgrounds pose barriers to securing employment and in turn decrease recidivism. CTDOL plans to educate employers and the public on the availability of the bonds, which provide up to \$25,000 coverage per employee over a six month period and encourage employers to use them as a hiring tool for persons with criminal records.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) helps individuals return to suitable employment as quickly as possible following employment loss. Participants are part of worker groups certified by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) whose jobs were believed to be affected by increased imports or a shift in production to a foreign country. Benefits to eligible workers

include job training, job search assistance, relocation and readjustment allowances; health coverage tax credit; and wage subsidies for individuals 50 years of age and older who return to lower-paying work. TAA activity during the program year included:

Worker group certifications: Petitions filed on behalf of workers from 18 companies were approved, with the workers determined by USDOL to be adversely affected by foreign trade and certified as eligible to apply for TAA; petitions filed on behalf of workers from four companies were denied.

- Individual applications: 631 individuals were identified by USDOL as potentially eligible to apply for TAA benefits and 223 eligibility determinations were issued in response to submitted applications.
- Training: 132 individuals entered TAA-approved training programs and 518 were active in training, with training payments totaling nearly \$2.7M.
- Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA): \$8,038,018M was provided for 14,541 weekly TRA claims, including 3,245 weeks of basic TRA, 9,724 weeks of additional TRA, and 1,572 weeks of completion TRA. Individuals who satisfy applicable program requirements may receive one or more types of TRA income support: up to 26 weeks of basic TRA; up to 65 weeks of additional TRA, and up to 13 weeks of completion TRA.
- Reemployment/Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (R/ATAA): \$86,908 in payments was issued to eligible workers.

In addition to the regular activities of the program, recent additions to administrative staff have helped position the Connecticut TAA program to better serve its participants, employers and field staff. A unit supervisor is responsible for providing technical support to administrative and field staff, while the new TAA Employer Liaison assists Trade employers throughout the entire two lifecycle of a certification and is the single-point of contact for guidance and technical support. The duties of the newly created TAA Petition Coordinator are being fulfilled by our current Rapid Response Coordinator. This individual is responsible for identifying and filing petitions for certification consideration and to increase the number of petitions filed, leading to increased worker participation levels.

As of October 2019, Connecticut is seeking to add five TAA Navigators (one for each comprehensive American Job Center). The Navigators will work directly with participants and through their assigned case managers to assist them in receiving the maximum benefits and services available to them through Trade and other workforce development programs. The ultimate goal is to provide them with all the tools, guidance and support necessary to find suitable employment after their Trade impacted job. Connecticut will pursue both the Petition Coordinator and Navigator positions, which are modeled after Oregon's Trade program and have been met with great success.

The Connecticut Department of Labor recently developed internal processes and procedures to making appropriate referrals and keeping in step with USDOL's emphasis on promoting work-based training opportunities (on-the-job training and Apprenticeship) for TAA participants. This includes promoting the program to employers through Business Service Representatives and educating participants regarding these opportunities.

Veterans Services: CTDOL advocates for and assists Connecticut veterans and covered persons with their employment and training needs through job search assistance, referral to supportive services, individualized career services that may include case management, and the provision of information about other state and federal programs. CTDOL ensures priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses and encourages their use of American Job Center (AJC) resources. One-on-one assistance is available to those individuals in the AJCs, either on a walk-in basis or by appointment. CTDOL staff assisted 1344 eligible veterans under Wagner-Peyser with 713

participants receiving services through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) program during the most recently completed program year 2018.

JVSG-funded Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists provide intensive services and facilitate placements to meet the employment needs of veterans and eligible spouses who have significant barriers to employment or have otherwise been designated by the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) as qualifying for DVOP services. These barriers and designations include the following:

A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C. §4211(1) and (3); special disabled and disabled veterans are those who:

are entitled to compensation (or who, but for the receipt of military retired pay, would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or,

- were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;
- Veterans who had active military service, in whole or in part, during the Vietnam Era, which is Aug. 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975; for veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam, the timeframe is Feb. 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975.
- a homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b)), as amended;
- a recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- an offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
- a veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
- a low-income individual (as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36));
- Veterans ages 18-24;
- Transitioning Service Members in need of intensive services (specifically, TSMs who have

been assessed as not meeting Career Readiness Standards; are ages 18-24, regardless of whether they meet Career Readiness Standards; or are active duty service members being involuntarily separated through a Service reduction-in-force); and wounded, illness, or injured service members receiving treatment at Military Treatment Facilities or Warrior Transition Units (MTFs – WTUs) and the spouses and family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured service members.

Individualized career services include comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs, development of an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals, suitable objectives and appropriate combination of services for the participants to achieve the employment goals, group counseling; individual counseling and career planning, and short-term prevocational services that may include development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training. Veterans and eligible spouses who do not qualify to receive intensive services from a DVOP may receive these services from other AJC staff.

DVOPs will continue to employ effective outreach strategies to identify veterans and encourage their enrollment in the workforce system. Outreach locations include, but are not limited to the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs State Veterans Home; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Clinics and Vet Centers; Connecticut State Colleges and Universities; local homeless shelters, libraries and town halls; community and veterans organizations including Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and The American Legion; and military reserve and national guard units. DVOPs also participate in re-entry and ex-offender meetings and serve on a number of advisory boards including those of members of Connecticut's delegation in the United States Congress.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), also funded by JVSG, conduct outreach to area employers to assist veterans in gaining employment and facilitate the employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans in the state's AJCs. LVERs are available to:

- plan and participate in job and career fairs;
- conduct job searches and workshops and establish job search groups, in conjunction with employers;
- coordinate with unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans;
- inform Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans;
- promote credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and
- coordinate and participate with other business outreach efforts.

Coordination of Services: In providing services under JVSG, the DVOP will assess the need for intensive services, determine whether case management is necessary, and make appropriate referrals to other services available through CTDOL or other workforce partners. Veterans and eligible spouses with significant barriers to employment (SBE) will be classified as job-ready or not job-ready. Those deemed not job-ready will receive individualized career services from the DVOP and other AJC staff such as CTDOL Career Development Specialists and WIOA partners. Referrals to other agencies and organizations providing supportive services, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, will assist veterans with addressing barriers and resolving issues that hinder their ability to secure gainful employment. AJC services such as job search and career planning, résumé-writing assistance, career counseling, and prevocational services will also help the veteran attain job-ready status. Once a veteran is determined to be job-ready, the DVOP will work with the LVER to make employment connections while continuing to provide case management and other intensive services as appropriate. CTDOL has implemented a case conference system whereby any CTDOL or partner staff member may refer a job-ready veteran to an LVER for job development or job referral services, including veterans who do not qualify for JVSG but are served exclusively by the Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Adult, or WIOA Dislocated Worker programs.

JVSG Staff Development: The DVOPs and LVERs participate in required online and classroom courses facilitated by the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) and are afforded opportunities to earn credentials such as Certified Professional Résumé Writer (CPRW). CTDOL supports the participation of JVSG staff in the annual National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) Veterans Conference which provides training and networking opportunities.

Employer Outreach and Business Support: CTDOL organizes an annual career fair for veterans, *Heroes 4 Hire*, which serves hundreds of veterans and includes the participation of more than 100 employers. To better assess employers' ongoing service needs, CTDOL staff will engage in extensive, post-event employer follow-up. Proven methods of community outreach are utilized to maximize veteran attendance and promote the American Job Center system. CTDOL's LVERs also collaborate with the sponsors of other career fairs including those organized by local chambers of commerce, and the annual Mohegan Sun *Vets Rock*.

LVERs will perform structured outreach to better engage employers, identify new contacts, and maintain established relationships. Service delivery strategies include the provision of routine follow-up after veterans are referred, more frequent employer visits, and a goal of offering assistance to every employer in the state. CTDOL will rely on LVER staff to help increase the employer penetration rate and enhance relationships with business organizations. Additional collaboration with specific employers to more regularly assist with their hiring needs is also planned, similar to an existing partnership with Yale University that provides for periodic "Meet and Greet" events for veterans seeking employment. LVERs also strive to meet the hiring needs of federal contractors and promote employers' apprenticeship opportunities for veterans.

CTDOL staff members make referrals to the University of Connecticut's Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans (EBV) program, which supports business initiatives for veterans through experiential and small business management training. Staff also provides information to EBV participants each year about JVSG services. Additionally, CTDOL maintains relationships with partners of the U.S. Small Business

Administration (SBA), such as SCORE, and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which also includes the involvement of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development and the University of Connecticut. JVSG staff attends the SBA's Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) meetings and cover outreach tables to promote AJC services to veterans and to further support entrepreneurial development services.

Homeless Veterans: Services to homeless veterans will be coordinated with the grantees of the U.S. Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) program, and CTDOL's own Homeless Veterans' Employment Program (HVEP). CTDOL's DVOPs, for example, participate in regularly scheduled outreach at HVRP grantee locations to provide individualized career services and ensure the enrollment of HVRP participants in Wagner-Peyser. HVEP staff help identify homeless veterans and make referrals to HVRP, SSVF and JVSG and provide supportive services of their own to help connect homeless veterans with housing and employment. JVSG staff also participates in annual Stand Down events that provide supplies and services to homeless veterans.

VA Vocational Rehabilitation Participants: CTDOL has a long history of collaborating with state and federal agencies to provide services to veterans who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation. CTDOL continues to maintain those relationships and explore new approaches to improve effectiveness. A Memorandum of Understanding between CTDOL, the Hartford Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs/Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Division, and the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, defines the partnership in place to assist veterans served under the auspices of Title 38, Chapter 31 of the United States Code.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) administers core programs and services listed in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II). Each local and regional board of education must establish and maintain a program of adult classes or provide for the participation in a program of adult classes for its adult residents (Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-69).

CSDE-Administered Activities

- to support shared governance structure, CSDE will participate in the Governor's Workforce Council meetings.
- to strengthen interagency partnerships, CSDE will:
- have members of the CSDE Adult Education Unit serve as members of the five regional Workforce Development Boards.
- share system infrastructure costs.
- provide services through the One-Stop system.
- make funding available to each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas.
- review and evaluate proposals with a team including representatives of the WDBs and One-Stop system partners.
- assess local workforce areas' needs and WDBs' goals in conjunction with each WDB.
- refer students to One-Stop Centers, monitor, act on referrals from One-Stop Centers.
- provide appropriate training for One-Stop partners.

To strengthen coordination and collaboration with key educational sectors and employers, CSDE will:

- align Integrated Basic Education and Training (I-BEST) training curriculum with employer/labor market needs. (I-BEST is Connecticut's contextualized integrated education and training program strategy.)
- partner with community colleges to assist adults' transition to postsecondary education and training.

- work with the One-Stop system to address the needs of local customers and employers and link adult education strategically to other employment and training services.
- work with the State's longitudinal data system and use a common intake form to provide consistently defined and applied data from adult education programs.
to continue to invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of WIOA and other Federal initiatives, CSDE will:
- work to interface the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) with the State's common intake and reporting system.
 - to support engagement in continuous research and analysis to realize the potential of state's workforce programs and delivery systems, CSDE will
 - continue to offer the I-BEST program and ensure that it is aligned with labor market needs.
 - to assist the entire WIOA partnership deliver a unified message, CSDE will:
 - participate in coordinated system-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Connecticut workforce system.

Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Administered Activities

The department's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) programs will assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment.

Housed within the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) are two Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs. The general VR program, situated within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), serves individuals with all types of disabilities except those with the primary disability of legal blindness. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) serves consumers that are legally blind, as well as current or former transition-age consumers with visual impairments. Consumers who are legally blind and deaf or hard of hearing are served by either BRS or BESB. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) projects their core programs, including the two VR programs and the Senior Community Services Employment Program, will collectively assist approximately 9,700 individuals in FFY 2020. Approximately 9,600 consumers are individuals with disabilities and 100 individuals are older workers.

BESB VR Counselors are part of regional business services teams meeting regularly to discuss current employer needs within their regions, and to identify upcoming employment opportunities and skill requirements to be considered as a qualified candidate for these positions. Through the execution of Memorandums of Understanding and accompanying Infrastructure Agreements, the VR Counselors are co-located on a part-time basis at the American Job Centers, encouraging clients to register for applicable services available through partner programs. Rehabilitation Technologists offer technical assistance on approaches to increase accessibility of the American Job Centers and partner services.

The state's AJC's maintain an Infrastructure Cost Agreement with both SCSEP grants. These agreements allow for SCSEP staff to use cubicle space at the AJC's on a weekly basis.

Connecticut Department of Social Services Administered Activities

The CT Department of Social Services (CTDSS) administers SNAP E&T, a work program designed to help SNAP recipients gain skills that will help increase self-sufficiency. SNAP E&T offers short-term vocational programs that are job focused and employer driven. Offerings range from 1-day security guard programs to 2-year associates degrees. The program operates on a third party reimbursement model. Partners investing nonfederal funds in allowable employment and training activities can leverage those funds and receive a fifty percent reimbursement. In addition to leveraging funds, these partnerships allow CTDSS to leverage the expertise and experience of each partner.

The SNAP E&T components included in the CTDSS state plan of operations include; Education/Vocational Training, Supervised Job Search, Work Experience and Job Retention.

These activities are delivered through eighteen partnerships that include five nonprofit organizations, a private nonprofit college, and all twelve community colleges within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system. The current partners delivering services are; Capital Community College (CCC) located in Hartford, Gateway Community College (GCC) located in New Haven, Housatonic Community College (HCC) located in Bridgeport, Asnuntuck Community College (ACC) located in Enfield, Northwestern CT Community College (NWCC) located in Winsted, Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) located in Norwich, Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) located in Waterbury, Middlesex Community College (MXCC) located in Middletown, Quinnebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) located in Danielson, Norwalk Community College (NCC) located in Norwalk, Manchester Community College (MCC) located in Manchester, Tunxis Community College (TCC) located in Farmington, Goodwin College located in East Hartford, Community Culinary School of Northwestern CT located in New Milford, Connecticut Center for Arts and technology (ConnCAT) located in New Haven, Opportunities Industrialization Center located in New London, Capital Workforce Partners located in Hartford and Homeless Hospitality Center located in New London. In addition to the partnerships with service providers, CTDSS also partners with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system office to help coordinate statewide initiatives. CTDSS partners with CTDOL through an MOU, which allows data sharing needed to fulfill the annual reporting requirements, included in the Agricultural Act of 2014, also known as the 2014 U.S. Farm Bill. In addition to the data share agreement, CTDSS utilizes CTDOL labor Market information (LMI) to approve programs based on the availability of jobs in selected employment fields.

As mandated in the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, SNAP E&T participants receive case management. Our current contractors provide case management services that are unique to their SNAP participants and beyond what they provide to their other non-SNAP clients. This includes employability assessments, progress monitoring, monthly case notes and coordination with other service providers. Case management services can also include referrals to other services such as Adult Basic Education or other support services to enable the participant to remain engaged in his or her activity. While skills building are the focus of the program, CTDSS balances the need for immediate employment with the goal of moving participants to self-sufficiency. There are circumstances when the component will be Supervised Job Search or Work Experience.

Successful participants who begin employment after participating in an E&T component may participate in Job Retention services. Job Retention provides support services to participants for a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of 90 days. Examples of supports offered are reimbursements for expenses that are reasonable and necessary; including equipment or tools, clothing or uniforms, and transportation needed to maintain employment.

As of October 14, 2019, there were 212,861 households, comprised of 364,474 individual recipients, receiving nutrition assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These low-income households include approximately 54,400 individuals who are not exempt from SNAP general work requirements. The Connecticut SNAP population is a diverse group with varying degrees of work readiness.

In addition to direct food benefits, SNAP in Connecticut also includes free educational opportunities. SNAP E&T is a skills based, employment focused, work program. The SNAP E&T program's primary goal is to assist SNAP recipients in gaining skills and utilizing work-related activities that will lead to paid employment. SNAP E&T is voluntary, with a focus on vocational training. SNAP recipients, who are not receiving TFA, are encouraged to participate by self-enrolling with the provider of their choice. Successful participants gain skills needed to find employment or improve employment in the current job market. The resulting outcome is increased self-sufficiency and decreased dependence on public assistance.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

CTDSS administers the CSBG federal block grant (approx. \$8M annually) with assistance from the CT community action agency network. The purpose of CSBG is the reduction of poverty,

revitalization of low-income communities, and empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

CSBG can provide an array of services - employment work supports, child and family development, community empowerment, independent living. CSBG has identified the following national performance indicators for states to follow: 2,943 persons employed; 1,741 maintain job for at least 90 days/achieve a “living” wage; 27,311 receive employment supports such as skills/competencies; and 599 completion of ABE/GED.

Child Support

CTDSS administers the statewide child support program. The goals of the child support programs are to assist families in reaching independence through increased financial and medical support, establish paternity for children born out of wedlock, and connect non-custodial parents with the Fatherhood Initiative.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Preceding sections have described numerous programs and activities provided by education, human services, training and economic development partners that may be considered outside of the plan. CT believes that in order to be prudent and effective, these programs must be managed with a unified workforce strategy and vision led by Governor Lamont.

Activities conducted for and services provided to jobseekers, workers and employers through the core WIOA programs covered by this Unified State Plan represent a significant portion of the state’s larger workforce development system. Other vital entities and stakeholders in the broadly conceived workforce system include the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), Board of Regents for Higher Education/Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (BOR/CSCU); Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) K-12 comprehensive schools system, Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), Office of Early Childhood (OEC), an extensive network of private colleges and universities represented by the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), proprietary schools, regional/local Chambers of Commerce, sector-focused business associations, organized labor, community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-profit service providers. Collectively this spectrum of stakeholders represents more workforce development-related resources and programs, serving more participants, than do the core WIOA programs covered by this Unified State Plan. The stakeholders in Connecticut’s broad and informal workforce system identified above have an impressive history and track record of collaboration in developing effective strategies and minimizing duplication.

State agencies, educational institutions and workforce partners will participate in the efforts of the Governor’s Workforce Council to align activities across programs. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), for example, collaborates and cooperates in a coordinated manner through a set of specific agreements with a wide array of organizations, entities and programs among workforce-related partners and stakeholders not specifically covered by this Unified State Plan, to pursue and achieve their respective objectives. Details are available in the state plan for vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services incorporated in this Unified State Plan.

In CT, two entities receive federal funds for SCSEP. The State Unit on Aging, as the State Grantee and The WorkPlace, as the National Grantee, are active statewide partners. With the State Unit on Aging now part of ADS, the actions and goals of SCSEP are now included in this combined state plan to provide a roadmap for serving older workers along with individuals with disabilities under the other Bureaus of ADS. Memorandums of Understanding and Infrastructure Agreements were developed to cultivate partnerships. Through these partnerships, the regular use of shared office and meeting space at the American Job Centers rounds out the services for older workers and workers across the life span. With a dedicated presence at the AJC, SCSEP staff work collaboratively to integrate services delivered through the AJC. Co-location limits the likelihood that older workers will miss opportunities to avail themselves of the quality services delivered through the American Job Centers. Co-location improves the connection between SCSEP

staff. The WorkPlace and AIC staff through the visible presence as well as collaborative conversations centered on the best menu of services for each individual.

Another example of an “outside” collaboration, is with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). The OEC will be an engaged partner with entities that prepare and provide training for individuals working with young children and their families across any setting. The OEC will partner with workforce entities to ensure individuals entering and re-entering the workforce have access to high-quality and stable child care through our School Readiness Program, Child Day Care Centers, Smart Start, Preschool Development Grant program, and Care4Kids child care subsidy program.

The child care subsidy program is an integral partner within Connecticut’s workforce system. Funded by the federal Child Care Development Block Grant Act, **Care4Kids** provides a child care subsidy to parents who are either enrolled in TFA, enrolled in an approved education and training program, or who are employed. The childcare subsidy is intended to make child care more affordable, therefore, allowing parents to enter the workforce and stay employed. The child care subsidy can be used for all types of early childhood settings, including licensed centers and family child care homes, and unlicensed family, friend or neighbor. The CCDBG reauthorization of 2014 is requiring states to implement significant policy shifts that address continuity of care and quality of care for the child. The focus on continuity provides more child care stability for working parents. The OEC will be available to provide information to the Workforce Development Boards and various workforce partners on the importance of high-quality childcare and early childhood resources. In addition to providing materials at the American Job Centers, the OEC offers information and training through the Child Care Resource and Referral Service and Child Care 211 Infoline.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Key State agency and local WDB partners were engaged in the statewide process of planning for WIOA implementation at State and local levels, emphasizing coordination of services and resources to provide high quality customer services and requisite support services. The Commissioners of CTDOL, ADS and CSDE are responsible for the review, endorsement and modification of the Unified State Plan to ensure coordination objectives are met.

Commitments to service and resource coordination among these State agencies are captured in Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) executed by the local workforce boards and the respective State agency Commissioners. Representatives of these State agencies participate in the planning efforts of each of Connecticut’s five WDBs to develop and update local WIOA plans, emphasizing cross- agency coordination consistent with provisions described in the endorsed Unified State Plan.

Furthermore, the **CSDE** will solicit eligible agencies to provide services to eligible individuals who are 17 years old or older, are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under Connecticut law, are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or are English language learners through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Adult education programs will serve as the major Unified Plan Partner entry point for individuals who lack basic skills. Once a participant has enrolled, adult education provider staff will refer participants to an American Job Center or Youth Provider to conduct a workforce assessment and develop an educational/career plan. Once participants meet adult education exit criteria, they will be referred to the American Job Center for evaluation. A unified referral management system will help local programs track participants as they move from agency-to-agency. This system will allow programs to give timely assistance to participants if they get stuck or seem to be dropping out. Information will be shared with adult education partners about adult education eligibility requirements, as well as dates, times, and locations of sites where adult education is offered.

The **ADS** and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs offer a wide range of services to eligible individuals, including guidance and counseling, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, adaptive equipment, rehabilitation teaching, job coaching, on-the-job training, low vision services, as well as a variety of skills assessments. ADS/BESB provides services on a statewide

itinerant basis through its office location in Windsor. ADS/BRS provides services in 14 offices across Connecticut where consumers may apply for assistance. In one of these locations, BRS is co-located with at least one core partner program. In several other locations, offices are in close physical proximity to partners. As long-term lease obligations and other logistical issues prevent movement toward increasing the number of co-locations, it is believed that formalizing referral processes and creating a service delivery structure that encourages partner collaborations will lead to improved coordination in services.

BRS and BESB have assigned staff to the primary American Job Center (AJC) locations in each of the five WDB regions to engage clients in services and to act as a dedicated liaison to the AJC. Staff serves on relevant committees and work groups at the AJCs. Through this approach, BRS and BESB staff become aware of initiatives, employment opportunities within each region, as well as workshops and training opportunities for consumers to register for and participate in.

SCSEP participants may register with the local American Job Centers. The first visit to an American Job Center can be overwhelming when an older worker is returning to the labor market. Older workers may be individuals seeking employment after being employed in a particular field for a length of time; individuals who have been out of the workforce for a length of time; or individuals who have recently exhausted unemployment compensation. As a required WIOA partner, SCSEP staff presence at the AJC will increase visibility of the program as well as promote familiarity and willingness to actively engage in services through AJC. The shared cubicle and meeting space promote interaction between SCSEP and AJC Staff. These interactions increase collaboration and sharing of resources to support older workers. Older workers who come to the AJC can also be referred to SCSEP as they seek assistance. Older workers can meet their SCSEP program coordinator at the AJC as well as attend monthly job club meetings at the AJC. However, since this co-location occurs on a part-time basis and SCSEP participants often access services on differing days and times, a second action to improve participant enrollment is the establishment of a single point of entry at the AJC for SCSEP's older workers. This staff person would guide the SCSEP participant through the enrollment process at the AJC to support ongoing and regular use of the AJC.

An additional aspect of this coordination includes cross referral processes already in place between the SCSEP Grantees. With services that overlap in some areas of the state and due to the limited resources of each grantee, ADS and The WorkPlace work together and determine who and how to best serve the participant. This program coordination streamlines program point of entry and services and maximizes limited resources.

Strategy: SCSEP will develop and implement marketing strategies aimed at increasing awareness of SCSEP services within labor market and job training initiatives.

During the last SCSEP Work plan, strides were taken to improve the partnership between SCSEP and the one-stop system. The State Unit on Aging met with one-stop administrators to provide information about older workers and about SCSEP. Each of the state's SCSEP offices has a working relationship with the local one-stop. In some areas that relationship is very strong as sub-grantee staff is co-located in the office. Staff provides information about SCSEP to potential enrollees. In other regions where co-location is not available, SCSEP continues to refer participants for workshops and job development services. The one-stops continue to be valuable resources for SCSEP participants across the state and the state will endeavor to continue cultivating these partnerships.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

State Level

Connecticut's Interagency Business Engagement Steering Committee consists of workforce system partners (CTDOL, OWC, Aging and Disability Services, Adult Education, Economic and Community Development, Workforce Development Boards and the state's community colleges and university system) who continue to work collaboratively in developing a statewide vision that enhances and aligns the services offered to Connecticut businesses. The Committee supports the coordinated approach of its five Regional Interagency Business Engagement Teams

to improve communication among all partners and develop innovative solutions to ever-changing business challenges. All workforce partners contribute content for the *Interagency Employer Resource Guide* and *Employer Reference Card* publications which offer road maps to the many programs, services and incentives available to business. These publications are maintained by CTDOL and are available in print and electronic format and provide an important marketing tool for the business services professional. The Committee also hosts an annual Interagency training for front line staff serving employers which provides a platform for the consistent communication of the statewide vision and an opportunity to educate all staff on the resources available to support the efficient delivery of programs and services to Connecticut businesses.

The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) engages with employers and workforce system stakeholders to promote strong employer and association-led industry partnerships, sector strategies and career pathways initiatives and support effective service strategies for the workforce system's business customers. OWC maintains a list of industry sector partnerships and initiatives to coordinate state efforts and to inform and connect new entrants to share ideas and best practices. State Board meetings have included presentations from industry sector leaders and offered an opportunity for members to share this information with their constituencies. OWC has maintained a strong relationship with the CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and through their leadership and funding resources, CT has successful manufacturing and IT sector partnerships. The Manufacturing Innovation Fund and the Tech-Talent Initiative (described in previous sections) have provided millions of dollars to CT businesses to support and foster their growth. DECD recently hired a Manufacturing Professional to lead that sector and he is also an ex-officio member of the Governor's Workforce Council.

OWC sponsors business breakfast seminars to provide information to business owners, human resources professionals, union leaders, etc. on current workforce issues. Presentations are given by staff from state agencies, colleges, businesses and non-profits. Recent topics have included: *Creating an Inclusive Workplace with Assistive Technology*, *Cyber security Threats – What Every Employer Needs to Know*, *Effective Participation in Unemployment Compensation Proceedings*, *Drug Testing in the Workplace*, *Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)...**How to Avoid Mistakes*, *Medical Marijuana in the Workplace*, *The Basics of Workers' Compensation*, and *Wage and Hour Basics and Compliance for Employers*. These seminars occur on a monthly basis and can be accessed through the businessct.com Web site, which provides streamlined access to business resources, industry sector partnerships, training assistance and incentives. Recently created publications – *Connecticut's Industry Sector Partnerships*, *Employer Resource Guide*, and *Employer Resource Card* offers a roadmap to the many programs, services and incentives that may be available to business. The publications are also available electronically through the businessct.com Web site.

OWC has been participating in workforce development technical assistance opportunities such as the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices multistate collaborative project that supports state efforts to analyze and understand the on-demand economy in their respective states and to take action to identify policies to support economic opportunity for on-demand workers. Through the project, states will share best practices and develop innovative ideas to improve economic outcomes and growth.

Local Level

Each comprehensive American Job Center has organized Business Services functions to serve business customers in a single, unified, coordinated Regional Business Services Team structure. The Team consists of experienced business services professionals from a variety of partner organizations including the state's Workforce Development Boards, the Departments of Labor, Economic and Community Development, Aging and Disability Services (ADS), Education, regional community colleges and technical high schools, and regional/local economic development officials.

The Regional Business Services Teams coordinate services across programs and agencies to provide each business customer with effective strategies and aligned services that meet their needs. Monthly working meetings among the Regional Business Services Teams support

information sharing and cross-training on partner programs and lead to the coordination of service strategies and effective service strategies for the varied business customers. Program descriptions, services and incentives available to business customers are published in the Employer Resource Guide and Employer Resource Card. Business services are marketed extensively, consistent with a focused business outreach strategy in each region. Social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are utilized as a low cost option to market workforce and education training programs, job fairs, events and available jobs.

Guiding principles of the Business Services Teams are:

- It's not about us – It's all about the Business!
- We are committed to providing service to Business customers that is seamless.
- Business customers in the *CTHires* databank must post all job openings for which recruitment support is provided.
- All posted job openings will be communicated and made accessible to the full network of prospective jobseekers.
- All job openings and recruitment efforts will be communicated to all Business Services Team members within 24 hours of becoming known.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the **ADS VR** programs, the primary goal of coordinated activities with employers is to establish long-term partnerships that foster a mutually beneficial relationship for both the employer and VR consumers. These long-standing relationships are built on genuine interest in the work of each employer, their needs and their priorities. This could mean that an actual job opening for a particular client may not come along for some time, but the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is nonetheless a resource employers can turn to for information, referrals to other service providers, and to learn about job site accommodations and provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Other valuable services such as informational interviews, job shadowing opportunities and work assessment site hosting can be offered. Company tours can be arranged for consumers to teach about a wide variety of careers, particularly important to transition-age youth clients who may otherwise have very limited exposure to actual job sites.

ADS is enthusiastic about CT's collaborative strategy that offers employers a seamless and coordinated team approach to placing job orders and identifying qualified candidates for employers.

In addition, **CSDE** promotes workforce preparation skills including literacy instruction, employability skills, career exploration and development, and links to employment, employment services and other options to respond to the evolving workforce needs of Connecticut's business community and to promote individual self-sufficiency. Providers develop partnerships with local businesses for on-site workforce education classes to assist employees perform specific job tasks and increase productivity. Adult Education services are also included in the Employer Resource Guide and the Employer Resource Card that are published by DOL and distributed to employers.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Connecticut education leaders and their key staff participate in decision-making processes defining and driving workforce system policy and strategy at both State and local levels. At the State level, Connecticut's Commissioner of Education (executive leader of Connecticut's K-12 public schools system), and the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education/Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (executive leader of a system of public 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges) are directly engaged in all phases of workforce development planning, strategy design, oversight and coordination. In addition, the Director of the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) ensures that the contributions of CTHSS are included, critical information is shared, and opportunities for coordination of programs and services are pursued, addressing the shared goal of ensuring that

youths and adults (students) are ready for productive work in Connecticut's key industry sectors.

Connecticut's *Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network* – P20 WIN – is a groundbreaking approach to education and workforce training-related data sharing in Connecticut. P20 WIN provides a secure data vehicle producing critical information needed to understand patterns over time and inform policy and strategy decisions to improve education, training and employment outcomes for Connecticut students. This new system allows Connecticut to evaluate how well our public education and training programs prepare students for additional education and careers in Connecticut. Executive leadership and senior research staff from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), the University of Connecticut (UConn), the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) actively participate in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data-sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making. Going forward, P20 WIN provides a systematic, secure and repeatable process to gather and analyze critical data to understand the impact of investments in education and workforce training programs, supporting coordination, alignment and integration consistent with WIOA principles, leading to better outcomes. Connecticut's P20 WIN longitudinal data analysis capability will allow for improved understanding of how Connecticut's various education and training providers and programs – including K-12, CTHSS, Community colleges – perform in helping students complete programs of study and perform in the workforce.

CSDE: Partner Alignment with Educational Institutions

CSDE will promote partnerships among local adult education providers and institutions of higher education, especially community colleges, to promote the successful transition of participants to postsecondary education and training. CSDE will rely on information from the workforce development system to track the progress of participants who have exited from their programs and have entered postsecondary education and training.

ADS: Partner Alignment with Educational Institutions

Both Vocational Rehabilitation Programs at ADS are actively involved in a variety of transition school- to-work initiatives, with extensive collaboration and coordination at the administrative and service delivery levels of the organization. Through a cooperative agreement with the State Department of Education, the roles and responsibilities of the VR programs and the public educational system are clearly defined, including financial responsibilities and coordination of services and staff training. Representatives from both VR programs serve on an interagency transition task force and appointed representatives from the Connecticut State Department of Education serve on the State Rehabilitation Council to BESB and to BRS. VR program information is presented at in-service training programs for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who have disabilities.

Regarding higher education, the Board of Regents has a cooperative agreement addressing services available in the university setting for students with disabilities. This agreement is with both VR programs and describes responsibilities to ensure that students with disabilities achieve equal access to classroom instruction, internships, and school-sponsored activities.

VR Program staff members participate and present information at BESB-organized in-service training programs for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are blind or visually impaired. BESB Children's Services Program provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff about low vision aids and adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded core curriculum activities and resources available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB.

F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

The Governor's Workforce Council Education and Training Committee will engage education and training providers to infuse new certificate programs to the eligible training provider list. The GWC has significant representation from business leaders from many industry sectors and will be identifying training gaps and educational solutions to those gaps.

The CSDE will work with other core programs and One-Stop partners to ensure that adult education and literacy activities are in alignment and to develop career pathways which provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. The CSDE will collaborate with the DOL to assist local providers in partnering with One-Stop Centers to develop career pathways and provide access to employment and training services. Professional development will be provided to local programs, including orientation to adult education programs and services for One-Stop partners and other agencies. Local adult education providers will refer adult learners to the Workforce Development Boards' Eligible Training Providers Lists for information about training opportunities in their region.

ADS liaison counselors work closely with the *American Job Centers* to make referrals for services within each agency's programs. When appropriate, ADS consumers may be eligible for training offered on DOL's eligible training provider list. Consumers take an active role in the process of pursuing these trainings, and VR Counselors are available to provide assistance. If there is a barrier to the ADS consumer accessing the trainings as a similar benefit to what ADS offers, the ADS counselor can approve payment to fund the DOL training. When ADS consumers access these DOL services, their names are automatically entered into the *CTHires* database allowing for optimal performance reporting.

G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

CSDE: Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

The funding of adult education programs in Connecticut braids state, local, federal, and private funding. There are 41 adult education programs in the state that provide mandated programs and continuing education classes. The state provides up to 65% of the funding for local adult education according to a needs-based formula. Last year the state provided over \$20,000,000 in funding and school districts contributed over \$16,000,000. The state also received approximately \$5,000,000 in federal WIOA Title II funds which are distributed through a competitive RFP process. In addition many local adult education programs receive philanthropic and corporate contributions.

H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Connecticut recognizes the value and importance of postsecondary credentials and certificates to workers and businesses, and that they vary significantly by industry sector and specific occupation. A variety of sector-specific initiatives are underway within each of Connecticut's five local workforce areas, most in conjunction with the appropriate local WDB.

In addition, the GWC committees will also be focused on examining characteristics of gaps in supply and demand, identifying high quality credentials and certifications, and ensuring swift access to training for CT residents. The GWC will solicit input from industry associations, unions, companies large and small to identify credentials of value, stackability, and ensure that proper marketing and messaging reaches students and job-seekers to improve WIOA program performance. The goal is to identify and verify the credentials employers value and that actually contribute to hiring, productivity and opportunity for career advancement.

Customers credential needs range between a GED, a RA, and a college degree. Two programs on the spectrum are described as follows:

CSDE offers three programs leading to a high school equivalency diploma: Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD), General Educational Development (**GED**), and the National External Diploma Program (NEDP). Local adult education programs also provide basic skills and workforce education through its highly successful contextualized integrated education and training program, I-BEST. All participants in adult education, including those in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, will learn about career pathways and will be taught the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and training. Participants who earn the high school equivalency diploma will be referred to community colleges and other institutions of higher education to transition to postsecondary education and training.

With regards to Registered Apprenticeships, the **CTDOL/OAT** will continue to implement strategies to support expansion, diversification and integration of RAP and further our commitment to new programs. CTDOL/OAT staff provide outreach, marketing and technical assistance statewide.

Elements of our strategy include:

- Creatively applying RA as an important workforce and career solution
- Encouraging utilization of WIOA funding where applicable, to support training programs and supportive services
- Building strategic and scalable partnerships in new sectors
- Building communication links and convening meetings to introduce employers to apprenticeship
- Cultivating relationships with Boards of Education, Superintendents, Career Technical Advisors and high school Guidance Counselors,
- Fostering a better understanding with CT's Community Colleges of linking their programs to workplace-based related instruction
- Establishing the Connecticut Apprenticeship and Education Committee to:
 - coordinate and identify potential pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training program integration;
 - leverage funding;
 - identify CTE programs within high schools and programs within higher education institutions for careers in various industries for credentialing as best practice models;
 - consult with members of insurance, manufacturing, health care, finance, biotechnology, STEM, education, construction, hospitality and any other appropriate industry to coordinate and identify potential pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training programs;
 - consult with SDE for the development of a best practices guide to help local and regional boards of education to incorporate relationships with the industries in their middle and high schools in accordance with Student Success Plans (SSP) and capstones;
 - working with workforce development system partners and the American Job Centers (AJCs) to incorporate apprenticeship into the workforce development system's business model so that Workforce Board and AJC personnel can emphasize to their employees and job seekers the importance of an industry-recognized credential awarded through an apprenticeship;
 - increasing the numbers of low-income individuals and underrepresented populations in apprenticeship programs; and
 - on-going modernization of Connecticut's apprenticeship IT system to enhance data collection capabilities and reporting of programmatic data.

Furthermore, Registered Apprenticeships are also being considered throughout the corrections system for Service Guide Dog Training, Barbering and Hairdressing apprenticeships. The goal of apprenticeships within the correctional facilities is intended to offer an opportunity to build work skillsets, job experience, potential licensure and earn an industry recognized credential that may lead to an apprenticed career or other career opportunity upon return to society. Other considerations for Registered Apprenticeship include Peer Recovery Navigator and Certified Recovery Specialist training programs to combat the opioid crisis, Childcare development apprenticeships as well as Para-professional to educator pathways utilizing apprenticeships. Through these efforts, CT will be poised to enhance the state's economy and growth while expanding registered apprenticeships which will support middle to high skilled jobs.

I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is the state of Connecticut's leading agency responsible for strengthening Connecticut's competitive position in the rapidly changing, knowledge-based economy. DECD is focused on support for existing businesses and jobs with a wide range of programs and services to help companies prosper; promote Connecticut industries and businesses both domestically and across the globe; and

strengthen Connecticut's communities by provided funding and technical support for local community and economic development projects. The agency oversees a broad range of initiatives and programs in the following areas: business development, opportunity zones, brownfield redevelopment, arts, historic preservation, community revitalization and tourism.

DECD is executing a vision to dramatically improve the state's economic development performance in conjunction with the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) through a public-private partnership. In addition, underway, the state is developing a long-term comprehensive, data-driven strategic plan as well as a cluster strategy for recruitment and retention of companies.

The needs and priorities of Connecticut's in-demand and emerging industries and businesses are:

- fiscal stability of the state's finances to ensure a stable and predictable environment that will yield private investment confidence
- build on the state's strengths (talent, location, quality of life)
- focus on innovation, key business sectors to stimulate business development, including offshore recruitment
- focus on talent development
- streamline governmental processes/regulation
- comprehensive multimodal transportation and infrastructure plan
- collaborate with key partners to improve business climate

The state and its economic development partners are focused on key economic drivers such as Insurance/Financial Services, Manufacturing, Bioscience, Software, Data Services and Technology, and Tourism. The need for skilled talent in critical growth occupations in these key industry sectors has been identified as a strategic priority requiring a continued close cooperation and coordination of workforce and economic development efforts. The agency works closely with industries to address challenges and opportunities facing all businesses.

DECD is a strategic partner with the Department of Labor with the recent launch of the Governor's Workforce Council to ensure alignment between industry needs and developing the talent pipeline. In addition, in the area of manufacturing and tech talent, DECD has resources in place to promote innovation and growth.

Governor Lamont's administration plans to reform the way state government provides incentives to private companies looking to add jobs or make significant capital investments in Connecticut. The foundation of the state's strategy is taking shape with a focus on four key programs, including two new concepts. Led by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) Commissioner David Lehman, the state's overall goal is to move toward a performance-based, "earn-as-you-go" system, meaning employers won't reap state incentives until they create a certain number of jobs or make a certain level of investment.

The new strategy will not require the state to borrow money up front to incentivize job growth as the Department of Economic and Community looks to reduce its bond obligations. The objective is to develop a competitive strategy that works for taxpayers and grows the economy. The major programs the state will now focus on include:

- a modified Small Business Express program that will no longer offer state loans or grants, but instead morph into a loan guarantee program run by private banks – emphasis would shift toward woman-owned companies, underserved communities and distressed municipalities
- a Grow CT Rebate will reward companies in specific industries (finance and insurance, advanced manufacturing, health care, bioscience, technology, and digital media) that create at least 25 jobs paying above-average wages.
- a greater focus on two existing incentive programs: the Urban and Industrial Site Reinvestment Tax Credit - which will be available to projects that add significant new

economic activity and jobs at an old industrial site or urban center; and the Sales and Use Tax Relief Program that exempts businesses from paying the sales and use tax when they acquire tangible personal property, equipment and services from Connecticut Innovations, the state's quasi-public venture investor that oversees the program.

The state and its economic development partners are focused on key economic drivers such as Insurance/Financial Services, Manufacturing, Bioscience, Software, Data Services and Technology, and Tourism. The need for skilled talent in critical growth occupations in these key industry sectors has been identified as a strategic priority requiring a continued close cooperation and coordination of workforce and economic development efforts. DECD is a strategic partner with the Department of Labor and with the recent launch of the Governor's Workforce Council strives to ensure alignment between industry needs and developing the talent pipeline. In addition, in the area of manufacturing and tech talent, DECD has resources in place to promote innovation and growth which include the following:

Chief Manufacturing Officer

This newly created position is an important ambassador for the industry on matters of workforce development, business climate, regulations, etc. and will collaborate with private, public, academia, local, state and federal government partners to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to strengthen Connecticut's manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF)

Connecticut manufacturing is booming, fueled by a robust supply chain of 4,500 businesses. Nearly one of every ten Connecticut employees now works in the manufacturing sector – and the demand for skilled manufacturers continues to accelerate. To advance manufacturing even faster, the state government established a \$75 million Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF), a partnership of the state Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. (CCAT). Among its many initiatives, the MIF supports innovation and growth in the state's advanced manufacturing sector. The fund assists manufacturers to develop or modernize critical equipment, support technological advancement, encourage research and development, and provide critical workforce training. The objective is to strengthen the supply chain network of small/medium manufacturing companies and ensure a productive, flexible, well-trained advanced manufacturing talent pool with competitive skills. DECD provides administrative oversight, with the counsel and support of an eleven-member advisory board, the majority from manufacturing companies. To date, DECD has directly invested approximately \$27.7 million in workforce development through the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF). This funding supports incumbent worker training and pipeline development by way of pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships and youth programs.

Connecticut Tech Talent Fund

The \$10 million Connecticut Tech Talent Fund is a resource for both workers and employers to ensure Connecticut has the workforce talent needed to fuel growth in key industry sectors in the digital economy. To date, \$4.5 million has been deployed to provide matching grants to companies hiring tech interns from local colleges and universities to specialized technology training programs focused on building capacity in the areas of Full Stack Development and Data Science and Analytics. This funding and programming meets a critical area of skills demand for Connecticut companies.

CSDE: Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

CSDE will participate in and support efforts of the Governor's Workforce Council to assist Connecticut business employers by continuing to develop and implement contextualized integrated education and training I-BEST programs that address the workforce needs of those businesses.

ADS - BRS

Through ongoing collaboration with the Department of Labor's Office of Research, a significant amount of economic and occupational outlook data is made available to the ADS VR Counselors, all of whom receive monthly updates on labor market information. The VR Counselors have also participated in training conferences that included presentations on the current labor market and an analysis of the trends looking into the

future. VR staff continue to actively participate in meetings on both a statewide and regional basis to identify strategies to prepare program participants for the employment opportunities that exist and that will be available into the future. Representatives from ADS take part in monthly Business Service Team Meetings hosted by the 5 Workforce Investment Boards at the American Job Centers each month and collaborate regarding targeted outreach to local CT Businesses.

ADS sponsors Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs at businesses across Connecticut. These Workforce Development programs are made available to other organizations as well such as Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Department of Developmental Services with plans for expansion to the Workforce Investment Boards.

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF-

As administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has lead responsibility to ensure that appropriate operating systems are in place and used effectively by all WIOA and workforce system partners, with appropriate oversight by the state board. CTDOL is currently working to refine the details of these necessary operational systems, including the state-level labor market information system, communication system, case- management system, job bank, and data/reporting systems. A description of Data Collection and Reporting elements is included below.

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL)

Data collection and reporting for the six core WIOA programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner- Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) will occur within separate case management systems located at each of three State agencies including the Connecticut Departments of Labor (CTDOL), Education (CSDE), and Aging and Disability Services (ADS).

CTDOL has contracted with Geographic Solutions to implement a web-based case management system, CTHires, to provide virtual services to individual jobseekers and employers, and to collect data required by WIOA for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Foreign Labor Certification, TANF/Jobs First Employment Services Program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

All adult education providers funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Adult Education Unit, collect and report through the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS). The data entered in CARS are used by CSDE to meet reporting requirements at the Federal and State levels. CARS data are the basis for completing the Federal reporting requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

CARS is a longitudinal database containing student information. The Student ID created for each new student in CARS is unique to that student across adult education providers and fiscal years. Students returning to adult education in a future fiscal year maintain the same CARS Student ID. Students who transfer from one adult education provider to another, or prepare in adult education and then register for the GED test are also able to utilize the same CARS student ID.

Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)

The ADS maintains an approved vocational rehabilitation case management system for both of the department's vocational rehabilitation programs. This system runs locally on servers housed within ADS and contains case information relevant to individual consumers and reportable data. The vendor has maintained an active relationship with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) who governs data collection for public vocational rehabilitation programs. RSA data elements have been adjusted to be compatible with the WIOA- Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) document.

SCSEP uses the SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Progress Reporting System (SPARQ) developed and maintained for the US Department of Labor. It is an online system and both grantees and sub-grantees have access to the system for data entry. Information about SCSEP locally, statewide and nationally can be accessed through this system.

WIOA Annual State and Local Area Reporting

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three Connecticut State agencies for each of the six WIOA core programs. The WIOA Annual Local Area Performance Report is a subset of the WIOA Annual State Performance Report, covering only the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it exists, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six WIOA core programs, and will ensure that this unique identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six WIOA core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of those programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

These same electronic files will be used to obtain employment information for each program participant who has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six WIOA core programs. CTDOL currently is responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for individuals who exit the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies for use in their Federal report submissions.

Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Performance Report

CTDOL will use the CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in programs, and on WIOA participants, as required under WIOA.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers Report

CTDOL will assume the role as lead agency in the Effectiveness in Serving Employers Report. Connecticut will be reporting on the Employer Penetration rate and Employee Retention.

As lead administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has responsibility to ensure that an appropriate and comprehensive set of state workforce system policies is established and are in place to guide effective WIOA service delivery. CTDOL has demonstrable experience and expertise in this role, having been responsible for administrative oversight and direction of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation in Connecticut. Building on a foundation of administrative policy developed during that time, the CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit has systematically drafted and developed the necessary inventory of WIOA-related workforce system policies. The CTDOL WIOA Policy Manual can be found at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/wioa.htm>. The policy manual is designed to be updated as necessary to account for changes and improvements in WIOA service delivery over time.

Data Collection and Reporting

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) maintains and operates an automated Workforce Development Business System to support the operational and management needs of the State of Connecticut's One-Stop employment service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To address these operational, management, and reporting needs, CTDOL requires that state and contractor staff funded under the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and National Dislocated Worker grant programs enter data into

the new CTHires system. Staff delivering services under the Trade Adjustment Assistance program also record data for this federal program into the new CTHires system.

CTDOL also requires authorized representatives of contractor agencies funded under WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to sign a Data Access Agreement, to ensure the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in their possession. United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 39.11 is appended to the Data Access Agreement. In addition, staff members of these agencies that will access the new CTHires system are required to sign a form entitled *Acknowledgment of Receipt of Confidential Information* to advise them of responsibilities with respect to confidential information.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

All adult education providers funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, collect and report data through the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS). The data entered in CARS are used by CSDE to meet reporting requirements at the Federal and State levels. CARS data are the basis for completing the Federal reporting requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

CARS is a longitudinal database containing student information. The Student ID created for each new student in CARS is unique to that student across adult education providers and fiscal years. Students returning to adult education in a future fiscal year maintain the same CARS Student ID. Students who transfer from one adult education provider to another, or prepare in adult education and then register for the GED test are also able to utilize the same CARS student ID.

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report and WIOA quarterly reports will involve CSDE obtaining electronic files in a standard file format established by CTDOL. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it does exist, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This will ensure a common unique identifier across the three CT State agencies for each of six core programs, and will ensure that this identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of the six core programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

ADS- BRS

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program at BESB has implemented a monthly tracking and reporting system to monitor their level of engagement in the American Job Centers.

Through part-time co-location at the American Job Centers, BESB VR Counselors had an onsite presence at the centers 135 times during Program Year 2018, holding 115 client appointments at the centers. Additionally, BESB VR Counselors participated in 29 Business Services team meetings during that time period. BESB VR Counselors directly facilitated the registration of 27 clients in partner services during these onsite meetings.

The General Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Program (BRS) has implemented a monthly tracking and reporting system to monitor the number of Work Readiness Training Programs we collaborate with the American Job Centers (AJCs) as well as the number of consumers who have registered for these workshops. This collaboration consists of AJCs provide the facilitation of BRS's Work Readiness Training Program curriculum and BRS providing the upkeep of the training curriculum, providing training to AJC staff on the curriculum and disability sensitivity, and providing evaluator services for consumers who attend the workshop using Community Rehabilitation Providers. Since the initiation of the collaboration in September 2019, six (6) American Job Centers have offered a total of

thirty-two (32) workshops which one hundred (100) BRS consumers have registered for. This program is available for BESB consumers as well.

ADS continues to operate under a cooperative agreement with the CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) for the exchange of quarterly WIOA data. Under this agreement, ADS supplies CTDOL with identifying information of consumer records and VR program involvement. This information is processed in a database housed at CTDOL where each case is either matched or assigned WIOA Unique ID. This creates a common ID for all individuals in CT who access WIOA core programs. Program Involvement supplied by each of the core programs is matched to consumer records. CTDOL also connects wage data from their Unemployment Compensation Database to all cases identified as post exit. Inbound and outbound data is securely transmitted using Pilotfish Technology.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

As lead administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has responsibility to ensure that an appropriate and comprehensive set of state workforce system policies is established and are in place to guide effective WIOA service delivery. CTDOL has demonstrable experience and expertise in this role, having been responsible for administrative oversight and direction of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation in Connecticut. Building on a foundation of administrative policy developed during that time, the CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit has systematically drafted and developed the necessary inventory of WIOA-related workforce system policies. The CTDOL WIOA Policy Manual can be found at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/wioa.htm>. The policy manual is designed to be updated as necessary to account for changes and improvements in WIOA service delivery over time. In addition, throughout WIOA implementation, CTDOL and OWC have had many meetings and discussions with local Boards and other State agency partners to support optimal service delivery in the American Job Centers. State staff encourage co-enrollment whenever possible and discussions to work toward universal intake processes. The State hopes to move toward greater integration of services as case management systems allow.

Data Collection and Reporting

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) maintains and operates an automated Workforce Development Business System to support the operational and management needs of the State of Connecticut's One-Stop employment service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To address these operational, management, and reporting needs, CTDOL requires that state and contractor staff funded under the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and National Dislocated Worker grant programs enter data into the new CTHires system. Staff delivering services under the Trade Adjustment Assistance program also record data for this federal program into the new CTHires system.

CTDOL also requires authorized representatives of contractor agencies funded under WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to sign a Data Access Agreement, to ensure the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in their possession. United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 39.11 is appended to the Data Access Agreement. In addition, staff members of these agencies that will access the new CTHires system are required to sign a form entitled *Acknowledgment of Receipt of Confidential Information* to advise them of responsibilities with respect to confidential information.

CTDOL Policy on Infrastructure Funding

MEMO: GP 17- 02
DATE: June 1, 2017

TO: Chief Elected Officials
 Workforce Board Chairs
 Workforce Board Directors
 Commissioner Jackson, CT DOL
 Commissioner Porter, CT DORS
 Commissioner Wentzell, CT SDE
 Commissioner Bremby, CT DSS

FROM: Kathleen Marioni
 Executive Director
 Office of Workforce Competitiveness

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Understanding Guidance
 One-Stop Infrastructure Cost Sharing

REFERENCES

WIOA Sec. 121(c), 121(h), USDOL TEGL 17-16, 20 CFR 678.700 – 678.760

1. PURPOSE

To provide updated guidance regarding one stop infrastructure cost sharing and the development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

1. **BACKGROUND**WIOA makes improvements to the public workforce system including a requirement that required partner programs dedicate funding for allowable infrastructure and other shared costs that are allocable to the partner and in proportion to the partner's use and the relative benefit received by the partner program. US DOL has recently provided detailed guidance to states regarding the development of MOUs and the determination of infrastructure and other shared costs (TEGL 17-16). The Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and one-stop partners is the instrument by which costs to support the one stop centers are outlined. The MOU must describe the operating budget of the one-stop centers, including how the costs of services provided by the one stop system and how the operating costs of the system will be funded, including the infrastructure costs for the one stop system. An Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) detailing the respective costs of each partner agency is a mandatory component of the local Memorandum of Understanding between the WDBs and one-stop partners. Attached are USDOL TEGL 17-16 and CT DOL MOU guidelines. In addition, USDOL has made available resources provided at recent WIOA convenings including the attached information regarding a comparison between local and state funding mechanisms.
2. Connecticut Department of Labor WIOA Policy **One-Stop Center Infrastructure Cost-Sharing Agreements** **1. Purpose:** **This Issuance conveys guidance for Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), and one-stop center Required Partners to manage creation of a local infrastructure cost-allocation agreement (IFA). The deadline for advising the State of an impasse in completing the agreement is given, as is the deadline for submission of infrastructure budgets. Procedures are discussed whereby a State- determined infrastructure-cost allocation mechanism would be triggered if a local agreement is not reached prior to the State deadline. The appeals process for disputing the contribution required of a one-stop partner by such a State mechanism is described.**
3. **Background:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local WDBs to develop and finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among itself and its Required Partners, with the agreement of the Chief Elected Official, for the Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA). The MOU coordinates operation of the local one-stop delivery system, provision of programs and services, and apportionment of costs. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) previously issued initial IFA and MOU guidance, GP 17-02.
4. WIOA requires that the MOU include details on how the Local WDB, CEO, and one-stop center Required Partners will fund one-stop infrastructure costs for all comprehensive

one-stop centers in the local area. It is recommended that any infrastructure cost-sharing agreement for affiliated-site costs be negotiated separately from the statutorily required cost-sharing agreement covering comprehensive one-stop centers. WIOA sec. 121(h) mandates that the State, through the designated authority of the Governor, provide guidance to assist local WDBs, CEOs, and one-stop partners to determine equitable and stable methods to fund one-stop center infrastructure costs. The cost-allocation methodology must be in accord with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2900. WIOA and its implementing regulations also require that the State's guidance include timelines for Local WDBs to notify the State if local infrastructure cost-allocation negotiations reach an impasse. If the Local WDB and the required partners are unable to conclude *and sign* a local infrastructure cost-sharing agreement for the ensuing Program Year before the State's deadline, WIOA gives the State no recourse but to impose an alternative State infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism. This is *not* an alternative to the local funding agreement. It is a statutory *consequence* triggered by an inability of the concerned parties in the LWDA to self-determine a funding plan.

5. Substance: **State Guidelines**
6. **In compliance with WIOA sec. 121(h)(1)(B)(ii) and the implementing rules at 20 CFR 678.700-678.55, as well as US Department of Labor Guidance letters, e.g. Training and Employment Guidance Letter 17-16, OWC herewith issues Attachment 1 to this issuance containing the "Connecticut WIOA Infrastructure Cost Sharing Guidelines."** Local MOU signatories are not bound to follow these recommendations; they may, in fact, adopt any local cost-allocation mechanism that is in accord with the Uniform Guidelines in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2900. Nevertheless, we strongly encourage local WDBs, CEOs, and one-stop partners to develop their local infrastructure-cost allocation agreements using these guidelines. **Notice of Impasse** An agreement must be negotiated, signed, and in effect by **January 1, 2018**, therefore final IFAs are due by **December 1, 2017**. Local WDBs must provide a Notice of Impasse to OWC no later than **November 1, 2017** where local negotiations were unsuccessful. This notification may originate with the Local WDB, the CEO, or any one of the Required Partners. **Budgets** Local budgets upon which the local infrastructure cost-allocation agreements will be based must be submitted to OWC by **November 1, 2017**. These will be reviewed by OWC and the WIOA Administration Unit. In the event of unsuccessful negotiations for a local infrastructure cost-allocation agreement, any budget approved by the Local WDB, CEO, and Required Partners will be used by the State as a basis for a State-imposed mechanism, as mandated by the WIOA Final Rules. If, by the State deadline for local cost-allocation agreements, there is also no locally approved infrastructure budget, the WIOA Final Rules require the State to determine that budget for the local area. **State Infrastructure Cost-Allocation Mechanism** If, by **December 1, 2017**, the local infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism has not been completed, signed, and submitted to the State, the State will be statutorily compelled to impose a State infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism as prescribed by WIOA sec. 121(h) and the Final Rules in 20 CFR Part 678. The specific allocations in this mechanism will be transmitted to the LWDB, the CEO, and the one-stop Required Parties for the local area prior to the start of January 1, 2018, if feasible. The State mechanism generally makes fewer funds available than a local agreement. The U.S. Department of Labor notes in its preamble to the WIOA Final Rules, "...while under the local-funding mechanism partner programs may contribute through any funds allowed by their authorizing statutes, under the State funding mechanism, infrastructure funds must come from administrative funds for the majority of partner programs." **Appeals Process** Upon receipt of the specific terms of a State infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism, any local WDB or one-stop required partner may appeal for cause, within 21 calendar days, in writing (electronic or hardcopy) the State's determination regarding the portion of

funds (or non-cash contributions) it the Local WDB or required partner is to provide. To be officially received, an appeal must fully contain evidence of the following:

7.
 - a. An introduction identifying the appellant and designating the letter as a formal appeal
 - b. Full citations from WIOA or the WIOA Final Rules in Title 29 or Title 34 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* that support the appeal.
8. **Identify the basis for the appeal. WIOA stipulates that a State mechanism allocation determination may be appealed only if the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of WIOA sec. 121(h)(2)(E). The Final Rule at 20 CFR 678.750 further limits admissible grounds for an appeal to three possibilities. The petitioner must make a case that the State's determination is inconsistent with:**
9.
 - a.
 - i. the proportionate-share requirements in 20 CFR 678.737, or
 - ii. the cost-contribution limitations in 20 CFR 678.730(c), or
 - iii. the cost-contribution caps in 20 CFR 678.738
10. The letter must be signed (electronic signature is acceptable) and dated.
11. Appeals must be submitted to OWC in one of the following manners:
12. e-mail to Kathleen Marioni, Executive Director of OWC, at Kathleen.marioni@ct.gov; or
13. fax to the CT DOL, Attention Kathleen Marioni, at (860) 263 -6529; or
14. mail to CT DOL, OWC, Attention Kathleen Marioni, 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT 06109.
15. **The State will acknowledge the appeal and return a determination from OWC under the designated authority of the Governor as quickly as feasible. Until the appeals process is completed, the appellant will remain liable for its contribution as originally determined in the State funding mechanism. If a one-stop partner's appeal to the State using the process described in 20 CFR 678.750 is successful and results in a change to the one-stop partner's infrastructure-cost contributions, then the WDB/partner MOU must be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure- cost contributions.**
16. Actions: **October 1, 2017**
17. A status report on each IFA must be submitted to OWC. This should include draft IFAs if available. **November 1, 2017** Local WDBs must submit a Notice of Impasse to OWC in cases where the Board determines it is unlikely an IFA will be negotiated and finalized by December 1, 2017. Local WDBs must submit local budgets for the infrastructure costs for the local area's one-stop centers to OWC on or before this date. These budgets will be reviewed by OWC and WIOA Administration. **December 1, 2017** All successfully completed and signed WDB infrastructure cost-sharing agreements must be submitted to OWC by December 1, 2017. These will be reviewed by OWC and WIOA Administration. If the local WDB has not finalized, signed, and submitted a local infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism to the State by December 1, 2017, the local WDB is required to notify the State. The State will in turn advise all signatories to the MOU that the infrastructure-cost allocations for PY 2017 (and for each subsequent program year for which the local WDB fails to reach such agreement) **will be determined by the State**, as required by WIOA sec. 121(h). The State one-stop infrastructure funding mechanism will be applied per the requirements of WIOA sec. 121(h)(2) and the implementing regulations at 20 CFR 678.725 through 678.750, inclusive. All signatories to the MOU will receive the State's Notice of Application of State Infrastructure Cost-funding Mechanism, with determinations of allocations, as soon as practicable after the local WDB provides the State with materials and documents relating to the unsuccessful negotiation, as prescribed in 20 CFR 678.735(a). **Appeal Process Deadline** Within 21 calendar days following receipt of a State Notice of

Application of State Infrastructure Cost-funding mechanism, any local WDB or Required Partner may appeal its allocation determination for such causes and in such matter as described in this Issuance under "Appeals Process."

18. Contact: Direct questions or comments regarding this issuance to Program Policy, Connecticut Department of Labor, at (860) 263-6755.

19.

20. References: WIOA Section 121, "Establishment of one-stop delivery system."

21. 20 CFR Part 678, "Description of the one-stop delivery system under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act," Subpart E, "One-stop operating costs." Attachments **CT DEPARTMENT OF LABOR WIOA MOU Dispute Resolution**

Form Dispute Submission Date _____ Local Workforce Development Board _____ Local Board Chair

Petitioner

(Name Person Submitting Form) Representing

(Local Partner

Organization) Local Partners Involved in Dispute Nature of Dispute (Describe the nature of the Dispute) Contact Information for Local Partners I, the undersigned, as representative of the above local partner, certify that the above information provided is to the best of my

recollection. _____ Signature of Petitioner _____ Date

1. POLICY

The WDB local plan guidelines issued on February 5, 2016, required the submission of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between WDBs and required partners, recognizing that the IFA and other components to the MOU would be added going forward.

Per TEGL 17-16, Section 14, USDOL is providing an extension for the implementation date of final FOAs to be in place no later than January 1, 2018. **However, this extension does not change the deadline of July 1, 2017 for the rest of the MOU, as required in this TEGL. Therefore, MOUs must be submitted to OWC by July 1, 2017.**

As a status update, we are requesting that WDBs submit draft or completed IFAs by October 1, 2017 to OWC.

WIOA provides that in circumstances where the local Board is unable to reach an agreement with required partners regarding infrastructure costs that a State Funding Mechanism (SFM) will be applied. If a stalemate is reached, the WDB must provide OWC the attached MOU Dispute Resolution Form and all materials that were generated during the local negotiation process, including:

- - Proposed cost allocation methodologies;
 - Proposed or agreed to infrastructure budgets;
 - Type and source of funds available;
 - Any proposed contribution amounts from partners;
 - Any agreed upon, proposed, or draft IFAs; and
 - Additional information as needed.

Please direct questions to Kathleen Marioni at kathleen.marioni@ct.gov or (860) 263-6526.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Department of Aging and Disability Services

The mission of the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) is to maximize opportunities for the independence and well-being of people with disabilities and older adults in Connecticut. The primary customers of the agency are individuals with disabilities and older adults. In the employment-based programs, business/employers are a dual customer.

The Department has four programmatic bureaus, including:

- Bureau of Aging Services (Aging)
- Bureau of Disability Determination Services (DDS)
- Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)

Programs, policies and practices are designed to promote employment, independence, equal access, self-sufficiency and self-advocacy. ADS is the designated state agency for the two VR programs. Consumers with disabilities who need help finding employment may apply for assistance at the applicable ADS offices. They may seek assistance to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment in a competitive and integrated setting. Services may include vocational counseling, benefits counseling, job search assistance, skill training and career education, school-to-work transition services, on-the-job training in business and industry, assistive technology services for mobility, communication and work activities, vehicle and home modifications, supported employment services, restoration services for a physical or mental condition and assistance accessing transportation options. Once eligibility has been determined, consumers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to identify the target employment goal and the services that ADS can provide to assist them in reaching that goal. The IPE also identifies the consumer's responsibilities to help reach the desired job goal.

ADS-SCSEP

As the state SCSEP grantee, ADS relies on its sub-grantee, who is under contract to provide services in the grant's service areas of Fairfield, Litchfield and New Haven Counties. Consumers seeking assistance in these areas can contact the sub-grantee or the State SCSEP Coordinator at ADS. In areas served by The WorkPlace, consumers can contact their local offices or the State SCSEP Coordinator at ADS, as well, to be directed to local services.

CT Department of Education

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to quality adult education programs which are accessible to all Connecticut adults and lead to mastery of the essential proficiencies needed to function as productive citizens in work, family and community environments. Connecticut's adult education programs are governed by Connecticut General Statutes, which require local school districts to offer education programs necessary to acquire basic literacy skills, elementary education, English language proficiency, secondary school completion and/or preparation for equivalency or proficiency examinations. Local school districts and other eligible agencies providing mandated adult education programs are reimbursed by the Connecticut State Department of Education on a cost-sharing, sliding scale based on the relative wealth of a district.

By supplementing Connecticut's commitment of state and local adult education dollars with WIOA Title II dollars, Connecticut expands its provider network while enhancing and supporting programs and services that are more comprehensive, cost-effective and responsive to community needs. In addition to the local school districts, volunteer programs, community based organizations and other agencies provide adult education services in Connecticut by recruiting and retaining educationally and economically disadvantaged adults. By focusing on the needs of learners, families, communities and employers, adult education programs succeed in improving the skills of Connecticut's learners, enabling thousands of residents to attain a secondary school diploma, helping to close the skills gap in the workplace, assisting non-English speakers to learn English, easing the transition to post-secondary education, preparing residents to attain U.S. citizenship and helping families to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.

CT Department of Social Services

CTDSS provides a wide range of services to children, families, older adults, persons with disabilities, and other individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. CTDSS delivers a wide variety of services to children, families, adults, people with disabilities and the elderly, including health care coverage, food and nutrition assistance, child support services, independent living services, energy assistance, and program grants. CTDSS administers Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, among others. With a staff of about 1,900, the department provides services to more than 1 million Connecticut residents of all ages.

CT Department of Labor

The Connecticut Department of Labor is committed to protecting and promoting the interests of Connecticut workers. In order to accomplish this in an ever-changing environment, we assist workers and employers to become competitive in the global economy. We take a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of workers and employers, and the other agencies that serve them. We ensure the supply of high-quality integrated services that serve the needs of our customers.

The CT Department of Labor's WIOA Administration Unit has administrative responsibilities for the WIOA Title IB funded programs as well as a multitude of other federal, state and discretionary funded programs providing workforce development programming.

These programs include: Trade Adjustment Allowance, National Dislocated Worker Grants, including Disaster Relief, Rapid Response, State Youth Employment Program, Department of Children and Families Youth Employment Program, STRIVE, Second Chance Initiative, Opportunities for Long-term Unemployed a.k.a. Platform to Employment, Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program, Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. The administrative functions of this unit includes but is not limited to policy and procedure development, monitoring – both programmatically and fiscally, development of grants and contracts, reporting, and management information system support.

CTDOL local office staff members deliver direct services within American Job Centers under the Wagner- Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Unemployment Insurance, and Veterans programs. Examples of services provided under these programs include: assessment of skills, vocational counseling, provision of labor market and other information, provision of referrals to employment and to supportive services for individuals, recruitment services for employers, unemployment insurance, and rapid response assistance for employers and their employees. These services are designed to assist individuals to obtain employment to ultimately achieve self-sufficiency, and to assist employers to secure qualified employees to assist them to become competitive.

CTDOL's Unemployment Insurance (UI) Operations, UI Tax, and ES Board of Review are separate divisions within CTDOL. These divisions work closely with the Employment and Training Division and the local American Job Centers to provide seamless customer services. Jobs First Employment Services (JFES):

The Connecticut Department of Labor's (CTDOL) Welfare to Work unit administers the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program, which serves recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA). TFA is Connecticut's cash assistance program for low-income families or pregnant women using federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. TFA eligibility is administered by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (CTDSS). The CTDOL administers the JFES program in partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the five Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). The WDBs operate as intermediaries that subcontract with other organizations to provide services to JFES participants at American Job Centers (AJCs) located throughout the state. Services include job search assistance, vocational education, adult basic education, unsubsidized employment, subsidized employment, case management, community service and other support services such as in-home assessments, case management and transportation benefits. All JFES participants are eligible to receive childcare subsidies through the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

(CTOEC). The ultimate goal of the JFES program is to enable participants, through employment, to become independent from cash assistance and be self-sufficient.

The Jobs First Employment Services program (JFES) has implemented a number of initiatives since the last CT WIOA state plan was submitted. First, CTDOL implemented the JFES CTHires electronic case management system in March 2018. Connecticut was the first state in the country to successfully implement a TFA/Welfare to Work system in partnership with Geo Solutions.

In April 2014, DOL began its initiative to implement a new web-based system known as Connecticut Helping Individuals and Employers Reach Employment Success (CTHires). This system will support the JFES program partners including Department of Social Services (DSS), Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and subcontracted case management entities.

CTHires is a powerful online job seeker/workforce services system, accessed as a website from home, work or at an American Job Center. It was specifically designed for job seekers, caseworkers, employers, training providers and workforce professionals. The system provides fast access to a complete set of employment tools in one website.

Features to help job seekers:

- Create and send résumés and cover letters to employers,
- Research training providers,
- Review available jobs and apply online,
- Set-up job search agents to automatically review job postings and send notifications of jobs that match specific skills sets,
- Track individual job search efforts and résumés sent,
- Research regional labor market information, and
- Utilize the email/message center to contact employers and case workers directly.

Features to help employers:

- Define skills and post job orders to find potential candidates,
- Research labor market information on salaries and economic data,
- Set-up a Virtual Recruiter search agent to automatically find candidates within the system that match the job skills of the job order, and
- Communicate with job seekers, agency staff, training providers and others within the system email and message center.

The launch for features and programs offered through CTHires ran in a phased approach. Phase I, which occurred in December 2015, included Wagner-Peyser, Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs. Phase II brought the JFES module and Phase III will bring in the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program.

The JFES program launched into CTHires in March 2018, making this a universal system for all the workforce development programs as WIOA, Wagner-Peyser and TAA launched as part of Phase I, in December 2015. The JFES module brought many benefits for the program, including:

- Improved compliance with JFES state and federal requirements for tracking participation hours and timeliness of service delivery,
- Developed a participant-directed and goal-driven employment plan which enables the participant and their Case Manager to collaborate on any modifications,
- Increased tracking of monetary penalties for noncompliance in cases where a participant must be referred for a potential sanction,
- Shared information with core partners including other workforce programs, state agencies, family service agency and childcare partners,
- Streamlined off-site auditing with comprehensive reporting components, and
- Enhanced data collection to ensure staff is capturing information accurately and timely.

After March 2018, the program development transitioned to developing the remaining requirements not required at the program launch date. These requirements include more

specific JFES reports that rely on the use of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) data from Department of Social Services (DSS). From March 2018 through November 2019, additional features have been or will be added to the JFES system, including:

- Overall improved functionality on system screens to save time on data entry,
- Enhanced attendance record functionality with an automated work participation report for federal TANF reporting needs,
- Increased alerts to notify case management staff of participant updates or system issues in a more timely manner,
- An automated interface with the subsidized childcare program to track participant applications, eligibility and enrollment in a child care program,
- Improved interfaces with DSS to track participant engagement in services and financial transactions for participation and transportation benefits, and
- Multiple program reports to track a wide variety of outcomes for JFES participants from employment and training outcomes, wage information, credential attainment, caseloads, timeliness of barrier resolution or management and access to supportive services, and progress in daily job searching tasks such as resume development.

2Gen Approach

The CTDOL Deputy Commissioner and the JFES Unit Director have been very involved in the state's 2Gen Initiative. As a result, the CTDOL JFES unit is looking at the entire JFES program through the 2Gen lens and is pursuing a number of enhancements to the program that are in the spirit of 2Gen.

Family Centered Coaching

The Connecticut Department of Labor Jobs First Employment Services Unit is partnering with the Connecticut Association for Human Services for (1) 2 day training session on the topic of Family Centered Coaching. The training would be held on October 21, 2019 and October 29th at the DOL Central Office in Wethersfield. The trainees include approximately 35 individuals, including the staff in the DOL Jobs First Employment Services Unit, representatives from each of the 5 Workforce Development Boards and some of their front line Jobs First program supervisors. In November, 2019, all JFES case managers around the state will also receive Family Centered Coaching training. This training is in conjunction with the State of Connecticut's 2Gen Initiative.

As DOL looks at the JFES program through the 2Gen lens, this training will be the foundation of the Jobs First Employment Services program going forward and will shape the way JFES participants are connected to the JFES program and the customer flow will be driven by the principles learned in this training as we partner with the Workforce Development Boards to implement these changes. The DOL JFES Unit Director and Operations Coordinator have already been through this training and have a clear understanding of the value of the training and the impact it can have on the JFES program and its participants. The Family Centered Coaching approach puts the client in the driver's seat where the client identifies the goals and challenges for themselves and their families. It focuses on the whole family unit rather than just the individual themselves. It also takes into account that families need different things at different times to move forward. This approach also incorporates a Mental Health screening component. Right now, approximately 50% of the clients referred to the JFES orientation session actually show up. We are moving from a group orientation session to a one on one orientation session which incorporates all of the principles of Family centered Coaching. We think this will improve the attendance rate at this orientation and lead to a greater level of engagement of these families who are living in poverty.

Implementation of Financial Literacy Workshops for Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)

Participants:

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) has partnered with the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) to provide the "Money Matters" financial literacy workshop to all

Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) participants within 90 days of being granted Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), Connecticut's cash assistance program. The workshops are facilitated by CAHS volunteers and are held in all of the American Job Centers (AJCs) across the state. The goal of the workshop is to help JFES participants take steps toward financial empowerment. An additional three months of one-on-one financial coaching will be offered to all JFES participants. While financial empowerment includes the concept of financial literacy, the main focus is to build the skills needed to create a budget, manage money and make "smart" financial decisions. CAHS works to empower and equip CT residents to become financially stable and financially capable so they can build a secure future. These financial literacy workshops are being implemented statewide in November and December 2019.

In October 2018, CTDOL partnered with DSS, IRIS and Workforce Alliance to implement a pilot in New Haven which involved embedding a JFES case manager at the local Refugee Resettlement Agency (IRIS) in order to allow a more seamless transition for Refugees into the JFES program. This pilot was designed to remove some of the historical barriers that refugees have faced in transitioning into the JFES program, including confusion around who was supposed to serve them and to what extent, language barriers, transportation barriers and other bureaucratic obstacles. This Pilot has been referred to as a national model by representatives in the federal government who oversee services to refugees.

In April 2019, CTDOL launched a pilot in partnership with Uber and the Workforce Development Boards in the Eastern and Northwest regions. The pilot program was designed to provide an alternative transportation option for JFES clients living in these 2 regions where public transportation can sometimes be a problem for clients to seek or accept work. In July, 2019, that Pilot was expanded to include the South Central and Southwest regions as well. As of October 2019, four of the five workforce regions in Connecticut were piloting the use of Uber/Lyft for their JFES participants and it has been very impactful for people who do not live near public transportation systems.

CTDOL recently completed a Pilot program in partnership with the DSS Office of Child Support Services and the Judicial Department's Office of Child Support Enforcement. Our three agencies came together to design a program that better connects dads who are unemployed and have child support obligations and attempts to connect them with employment services at our American Job Centers around the state with the goal being to help them become employed so that they can then meet their child support obligations. We piloted the program in Hartford, Waterbury and New Britain and will expand this program statewide in January. It's a much more dignified approach for the dads who come into our offices and gives the Judicial Magistrates much better information on what level of effort the dads are putting into their job searches.

A pilot was introduced in SFY 19 to certify 6 staff associated with the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program in the art of Employment Interviewing. The six staff that comprised the pilot included one representative from the CT Department of Labor, and one representative from each of the five Workforce regions. The five regional staff consisted of front-line JFES Case Managers, workshop presenters, job coaches, and supervisors from Workforce Development Boards.

The CEIP credential is offered through the Professional Association of Resume Writers and Career Coaches (PARW/CC). PARW/CC was founded in 1990, becoming an industry leader as at a time when there were no other organizations for career professionals to exchange information and enhance skills to provide professional services to the general public. Besides the CEIP certification PARW also offers educational opportunity additional industry-recognized credentials, including Certified Professional Résumé Writer (CPRW), Certified Professional Career Coach (CPCC), and Certified Empowerment & Motivational Professional (CEMP).

The pilot CEIP group is currently creating a workshop to be presented in each Workforce region specifically for JFES clients. The JFES staff serves clients who currently are receiving cash assistance through the Connecticut Department of Social Services. The majority of JFES clients

come with multiple barriers to employment, including lack of transportation, childcare, reading and math deficiencies, as well as having little or no work history. These barriers present unique challenges when clients attempt to enter the workforce, so the goal of the new workshop will be to help JFES clients learn how to go through the interview process by giving them skills and tools for interviewing in today's job market. The workshop will cover the basics, such as what to wear and what to bring, as well as more in-depth information such as non-verbal communication, developing strategies to respond to common interview questions, questions to ask the employer, and how to appropriately follow up after the interview. The strategies for interview responses will cover unique situations such as having no work experience, or multiple short-term periods of employment (otherwise known as "job hopping") and potential barriers such as criminal history. Additionally, the workshop will include an hour dedicated to clients participating in mock interviews, which can be a very insightful learning experience that will show clients specifically how they can improve their interviewing skills.

With the success of the pilot CEIP group, the CT Department of Labor saw the value in dedicating time and resources to have all staff of the JFES and Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, state wide, obtain the CEIP certification. Being CEIP certified has added, and will continue to add, validity to staff member skillsets when it comes to their capabilities as interviewing professionals. This certification process represents an enormous step forward for Connecticut in building the capacity of its workforce professionals and the quality of the guidance being given to clients concerning their job interviews. Front-line staff for JFES and WIOA is co-located in the American Job Centers throughout the State of Connecticut. The CT Department of Labor JFES staff work closely with PARW/CC to coordinate the certification efforts through 4 sessions occurring within the state program year 2020. In each session, a blend of JFES and WIOA staff obtain certifications, starting with a motivational and educational kick-off meeting hosted by CT Department of Labor JFES staff that explain the expectations and give an overview of CEIP certification.

Revamped customer flow- CTDOL is currently reviewing the customer flow for the JFES program and plans to make dramatic changes to the current flow. First, CTDOL's JFES Unit will be forming a workgroup along with representatives of the 5 WDBs. We intend to change the current flow which requires the client to attend an initial group JFES orientation and instead, have the client attend a one on one meeting with their case manager which will incorporate many of the strategies learned in the Family Centered Coaching training. A mental health screening tool, the Patient Health Questionnaire-2, will also be incorporated into one of the first couple of appointments.

CTDOL's JFES unit is in the process of reviewing the informational packets that are provided to all JFES clients at their initial orientation to the program. The plan is to include more information pertaining to both employment and barrier removal. Informational brochures on Apprenticeship opportunities, a Connecticut Career Paths booklet, new Job Search strategies booklets and details on the barrier removal services available to JFES clients will all be included in the updated packets.

In SFY 17, Language Line was purchased and launched for the JFES Case Managers to use with their non-English speaking clients. Language Line services translates 240 languages by using 10,000 professionally trained individuals. Language line is accessed by calling a 1- 800 number, entering a special code and asking for the language needed for the interpreter services. The interpreter services are available 24/7. The Language Line services are available statewide in all 5 workforce development regions.

For the Job's First program, Language Line insures that non-English/limited-English speaking individuals would be able to hear and understand all the program requirements, and benefits of the program in their own language. The Job's First Staff would be able to provide the best possible service to their clients by being able to understand what their clients need. This utilization of Language Line helps bridge language and cultural barriers to help strengthen client and case manager relationships, as well as build trust. The service has proven a valuable and critical tool for JFES case managers and has remained funded consistently since its launch.

“Do What You Are” is an assessment tool used to determine a Personality Type based on the book of the same name and research completed by Paul Tieger. Personality Types include sixteen different combinations of four unique personality indicators and tendencies, represented by a series of letters (INTJ, ENTP, INFP, etc.). These types were coined by Carl Jung, the father of analytical psychology, and the letters are a convenience to shorten the types. The letters were developed by Katharine Cook Briggs, who co-authored the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). “Do What You Are” also utilizes this shorthand. The theory is individuals that belong to a specific Personality Type are likely to behave in a certain way. Paul Tieger, in collaboration with Career Team LLC, developed a web-based version of the assessment that was purchased by the JFES Program in SFY 17. Shortly after the roll-out of this new tool, CT Department of Labor held a kick-off presentation featuring Paul Tieger and Career Team, so all JFES case management staff received training on how to use the tool and the theories behind it.

A total of 1,500 licenses (300 each) were distributed to each of the 5 Workforce Board Regions for SFY 17. The assessment for “Do What You Are” tests individuals on these indicators and tendencies to provide clients with their own Personality Type and then makes the connection from Personality Type to potential alignment with suitable employment prospects. Clients receive a printable report that details information on their Personality Type and employment options to consider.

The “Do What You Are” assessment tool has been in use for over 3 years by the JFES Case Management staff. For SFY 20, it will be a prerequisite for Job’s First clients to attend a new Interviewing workshop created by JFES staff that has received the Certified Employment Interview Professional credential. Prior to attendance in the Interviewing workshop, clients must complete the “Do What You Are” assessment and bring a copy of the “Do What You Are” printed report listing their Personality Type and possible employment prospects to their case manager. Requiring the client to bring the “Do What You Are” report to the Interviewing workshop will help the workshop presenter to guide the Interviewing workshop’s content by tailoring their interviewing advice towards the unique characteristics of their clients.

For SFY 20, the JFES unit recommended each Workforce Development Board (WDB) purchase desktop scanners that are compliant for use with the JFES and CTDOL electronic business system, CTHires. The paperwork burden on JFES participants and staff can be quite large, and all documentation is currently saved in a paper file which creates, at times, bulky records and ongoing needs for secured physical storage facilities. In an effort to go paperless, the JFES unit at CTDOL advised the WDBs of an implementation schedule as to when and how documents can be scanned into the electronic business system in order to avoid having to maintain a paper system.

This implementation schedule started on October 1, 2019 and continues in four phases through May 1, 2020. The JFES program staff will be scanning in documents including pay stubs to verify employment, verification forms for attendance in federally-mandated work activities, letters sent to the participant for appointment reminders or engagement needs, and electronic copies of the employment plan.

When possible, CTDOL is also advising the JFES staff to shred physical paper forms after securely scanning the documents into the business system. Some forms also allow the ability to bypass physical printed copies altogether. For example, the JFES Employment Plan can be signed using an electronic signature pad in CTHires. If the participant agrees, this plan can be emailed as opposed to printed so the participant can retain a copy while the master record remains in the CTHires business system. Lastly, this effort will enhance the CT DOL JFES unit’s ability to monitor cases off site, reducing the need to travel and review physical paper copies for questioned items. All documentation required for case reviews will now be securely stored within CTHires. The DOL JFES Unit is partnering with Capital Workforce Partners, the State Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and their 36 vendor organizations to pilot an initiative that involves having OEC vendors come to a handful of JFES Orientations to give a brief presentation about their home visitation program that is designed to improve parenting skills, ensure child safety, ensure that women bring their pregnancies to successful full term births and improve

the employability of the parent who may want to work. OEC estimates that almost all of our JFES participants would be eligible for one of the home visitation programs that they offer. We agreed to start small and gauge the potential level of interest on the part of our JFES clients and then proceed accordingly. If this model proves to be successful, we would expect to expand this model statewide. This partnership has great potential for expanding 2Gen footprint in Connecticut. We are hoping to launch this 3 week pilot with all the appropriate stakeholders in early 2020 at the Hartford AJC.

The DOL JFES Unit is also working with the State Office of Early Childhood on a second initiative. This initiative involves educating OEC vendors who conduct these home visits to parents, to assist them in becoming employed or get into training. Currently, these vendor staff has limited knowledge of all that is offered through the American Job Centers. CTDOL is pursuing the possibility of having a tour/information session(s) conducted by a DOL Unit Director in each of the 5 comprehensive offices to increase their familiarity with what we have to offer. We would expect this to happen in early 2020.

The DOL JFES Unit is required to produce an Annual report on the details of the program. For the first time ever, the DOL JFES unit produced their Annual Report for SFY18 in the form of a customized video rather than a printed document. The 8 minute video was produced in partnership with the Media team at Middlesex Community College and the 5 Workforce Development Boards in Connecticut. The video featured both program data as well as several success stories of JFES clients and their employers telling their stories in their own voices on camera which resulted in a very powerful video. The DOL JFES Unit is currently working on their video for the SFY19 Annual Report which will feature a number of refugees who are participating in the New Haven JFES Refugee pilot.

In 2018, the CTDOL JFES Unit launched a second video project in partnership with Middlesex Community College and the 5 Workforce Development Boards. This time, the goal was to create an updated video that would be shown to all JFES clients at the JFES Orientation sessions around the state. This video would replace the old video which was more than 10 years old. The video was integrated into the JFES Orientation sessions in early 2019 and has been incredibly well received by our JFES participants who say that they find the video to be very inspiring. CTDOL's JFES Unit works in close partnership with the 5 WDBs to identify the training needs of the JFES case managers around the state. The CTDOL JFES Unit is responsible for organizing and implementing many of the professional development activities that the JFES case managers attend throughout the year. The grid shown below outlines the various trainings that the JFES case managers have attended throughout the past 4 years.

Training Topic	Facilitator(s)	First Date
Family-centered coaching Training	Liz Fraser	10/21/2019
CEIP- Certified Employment Interviewer Professional	PARW/CC Self-study guide	10/10/2019
CEIP -Certified Employment Interviewer Professional	PARW/CC Self-study guide	7/12/2019
Successful Interviewing-Building Magic	Jay Block	6/14/2019
Two Gen Overview	Sarah Griffen	6/14/2019
Collaboration	Mike Fazio- Workforce 180	6/14/2019
Diversity Skills Training	Carol Boin and Carlos Figeroa-CREC	4/25/2019
Training Topic	Facilitator(s)	First Date
Advanced Facilitation/ Presentation Skills Training	Cindy Maher (Leading Edge Coaching and Development)	2/8/2019
211/ Care 4 Kids Overview	Annie Scully, Kate Quigley (211ct) Troy Moore, Care 4 Kids	1/18/2019
CEIP- Certified Employment Interviewer Professional	PARW/CC Self-study guide	1/2/2019
Employer Engagement Training	Mike Fazio- Workforce 180	10/11/2018
Developing Awareness, Skill-Building	Cindy Maher (Leading Edge Coaching and	6/22/2018

Training Topic	Facilitator(s)	First Date
and Motivation	Development)	
Domestic Violence Training	Linda Blozie (CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence)	11/9/2018
Your Money, Your Goals	Faye Griffiths-Smith-UConn Extension	10/12/2018
ADS Referral Training	Alicia Kucharczyk	9/7/2018
Motivational Interviewing	Tiffany Parkhouse	6/6/2018
Professional Ethics & Case Notes Training	Bruce Benson	4/6/2017
Substance Abuse Training	Richard Fisher (DMHAS)	3/8/2017
CASAS Training	Astrid Robitaille	1/1/2017
Resume Training	Deb Walker- Diana Ryan	11/17/2019
Public Speaking / Presentation Skills	Carol Boin	10/16/2019

National Health Emergency- Dislocated Worker Opioid Emergency Grant

In 2016 Connecticut ranked 11th among all states in highest rate of overdoses, with 27.4 deaths per every 100,000 people. This increase was seen in every county in CT across all racial populations and across all economic incomes. <https://ctmirror.org/category/ct-viewpoints/connecticuts-opioid-epidemic-a-glimpse-of-the-last-five-years/> The disaster has led to significant effects on CT's Labor Force Participation as indicated in the American Action Forum report "State by State : The Labor Force and Economic Effects of the Opioid Crises" The report indicates the growth in prescription opioids from 1999-2015 caused the prime labor force participation rate to decline in CT by 1.6% or a loss of 22,900 jobs. This decline resulted in a cumulative cost of 310 million work hours to Connecticut's economy at a loss of \$18.2 billion dollars in real economic output.

In October 2019, the Connecticut Department of Labor was awarded \$1,585,948 with up to \$4,757,845.00 for the CT National Health Emergency (NHE) Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG). The "CT Works to Recover" program will provide workforce services to Connecticut's diverse population by leveraging existing resources with new initiatives. In coordination with the CT Department of Labor, each of the states five workforce development boards will work together to provide both state-wide and local initiatives aimed at providing training, career services and support, employer out-reach and disaster related employment to the state. The grant will combine two state-wide initiatives with five regional initiatives which will be coordinated through a Workforce Opioid Advisory Board selected and coordinated by the CT Department of Labor Commissioner or his designee.

State-Wide Initiatives

Each comprehensive American Job Center will employ at least one Peer Recovery Navigator, supported by the WIOA NHE/DWG Disaster Employment Grant. Trained at the minimum level of Certified Counselors in Training or Peer Recovery Coaches, navigators will work to identify individuals in the occupations most associated with abuse and provide them with referrals to remove barriers, provide supportive services, obtain counseling and treatment and return participants to their former employment or employment which is more suited to their recovery efforts. These navigators will work at the American Job Centers and their hubs and in the communities they serve to provide the support services needed to obtain and continue in occupations that provide a living wage. In addition, Peer Navigators will work on the Employer Recovery Friendly Initiative. All Peer Recovery Navigators will be enrolled in CT's Certified Alcohol and Drug Counseling Apprenticeship Program.

CT will join the growing number of states committed to providing employers with training on "Recovery Friendly Workplaces". Recovery Friendly Workplaces (RFW's) support their communities by recognizing recovery from substance use disorder as strength and by being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery. RFW's encourage a healthy and safe environment where employers, employees, and communities can collaborate to create positive change and eliminate barriers for those impacted by addiction. Through its Business Service Unit and with the assistance of Peer Navigators, American Job Center will

reach out to employers in the state of CT who wish to be designated by the Governor as “Recovery Friendly”. Employers wishing to be designated as Recovery Friendly must attend an orientation, complete a short training program, commit to a recovery friendly work environment and be subject to an annual review. Employers designated as Recovery Friendly will receive recognition by the Governor, a distinctive sign to display regarding their designation, be advertised as a Recovery Friendly Workplace and receive valuable referral options for those affected by substance abuse and mental health issues.

Local Initiatives

Connecticut’s Workforce Development Boards (WDBs)

Connecticut’s Workforce Development Boards conduct comprehensive planning, and coordinate regional workforce development policy and programs. With a regional focus, the Boards assess regional employment and training needs and priorities, conduct planning for and coordinate programs that address those needs. In addition, the Boards create annual employment and training plans, and review regional grant proposals and plans submitted to state agencies by other organizations to assure that all regional planning is consistent with an overall statewide blueprint for workforce development. The Boards, with the Connecticut Department of Labor, other State agencies and private organizations, form a statewide partnership to achieve comprehensive workforce development in the State.

Workforce Development Board Initiatives

The following demonstrates Connecticut’s Workforce Development Boards leadership in attracting funds to support Connecticut’s workforce development efforts across the education and training continuum and the willingness of the WDBs to play a critical intermediary role in the efforts led by higher education and workforce system partners. Together they have developed and implemented several new industry sector partnerships with career pathway components.

Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)

EWIB’s Health Professions Opportunity Grant

The Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) is a five-year \$7.5 million-dollar grant awarded to the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board and its partners, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, and Workforce Alliance. The grant is focused on training participants receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other low-income individuals in entry level healthcare occupations and advancing them along a healthcare career pathways through a) work-readiness and contextualized basic skills boot camp; b) occupational skills training resulting in a community college certificate; c) intensive, person-centered case management and other supportive services; d) work-based learning opportunities; and e) job placement assistance. Funding was awarded competitively to the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, in collaboration with Workforce Alliance and the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board. This contract period is renewed annually, with a start date each period of October 1.

Health Careers Advancement Project (HCAP)

Health Careers Advancement Project (HCAP) funding provides opportunities for TANF recipients and other low income individuals to enter and advance along four health career pathways through a) work-readiness and contextualized basic skills boot camp; b) occupational skills training resulting in a community college certificate; c) intensive, person-centered case management and other supportive services; d) work-based learning opportunities; and e) job placement assistance. Funding was awarded competitively to the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, in collaboration with Workforce Alliance and the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board. This contract period is renewed annually, with a start date each period of October 1.

The Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) was established by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), in partnership with manufacturing employers, community colleges, technical high schools, and workforce development partners, to respond to large-scale employer demand for skilled manufacturing workers. It was launched in 2016 by a

Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and has been substantially sustained through a variety of state and philanthropic funding sources. Two over-arching goals undergird the MPI:

1. Enhance strategic collaboration and alignment of workforce development and partner programs by ensuring that workforce development activities target the identified needs of regional employers through customized training, aligning training and employment services with available jobs, and expanding employer commitments to hire program completers.
2. Strengthen the quality of American Job Center (AJC) services by increasing the use of high-quality skills assessment tools and case management methods, and by working directly with employers to identify training needs in growing industry sectors.

USDOL training dollars for the MPI expired on September 30, 2018 with the following results:

- 6,681 portal registrants (exceeding the goal of 1,350)
- 1,400 of these portal registrants earned high scores on the skills assessment (exceeding the goal of 564) which was developed by Electric Boat, other manufacturers, and the regional community colleges
- 74 information sessions were delivered to 1140 individuals
- 823 individuals enrolled in the program (exceeding the goal of 450) which included completing the one-on-one appointment with the case manager who developed a personal service plan as well as identifying the support service needs and informing of stipend policy
- Customized trainings included Welding; Design; Introduction to Manufacturing; Sheetmetal/Shipfitter; Electrical; Inside Machinist; Outside Machinist
- 44 training cohorts were held during this time
- All participants that completed the program earned Pre-apprenticeship certifications from the CT DOL Office of Apprenticeship Training
- 745 individuals employed
- Although the USDOL funds have been exhausted, MPI services continued to be offered and has been sustained by using a variety of resources, from CT DOL funds to Foundation and Philanthropic and continues to be strong. Foundation funding provided an opportunity to replicate the program at several area high schools with a Youth MPI program. More than 1,500 people have been placed in employment through the MPI as of December 31, 2019.

The MPI model serves as the prototype for the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative, which has involved \$15 million of State Bond funding to replicate the MPI in other regions and industries.

The Workplace, Inc. - Southwestern Connecticut's Workforce Development Board Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program

The Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program helps home owners who are two or more months behind in their mortgage gain the skills they need to be able to earn more money to become financially stable by providing employment assistance. Services include:

- Job Training Scholarships
- Financial Literacy
- Credit Counseling
- Referrals to other needed services

The Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program staff work in partnership with credit counselors and other support agencies to help improve your financial standing with lenders.

Platform to Employment

The Platform to Employment (P2E) program was launched by The WorkPlace to assist the long-term unemployed return to work while addressing employers' needs to recruit skilled workers. P2E provides businesses a risk-free opportunity to evaluate and consider hiring

qualified participants in a work experience program. P2E supports individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits and remain unemployed.

Participants engage in a structured preparatory program including skills assessment, career readiness workshops, employee assistance services, coaching and other supports. Upon completion, participants are helped to find open positions at local companies. Placements occur on a trial basis and are subsidized over an eight-week period. The expectation is that a company satisfied with a candidate's performance will offer a full-time job.

The Connecticut General Assembly continues to fund P2E on a statewide basis with classes held in Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Haven, Hartford and the Norwich/New London areas. P2E's success is unparalleled. Nearly 80% of Connecticut participants who complete the preparatory program take the next step into a paid work experience with local companies. Of this population, nearly 90 percent have successfully moved to employer payrolls with average annual earning at placement in excess of \$50,000.

Southwestern Connecticut Health CareerRx Academy (HCA)

The Southwestern Connecticut Health CareerRx Academy (HCA) provides tuition assistance and support to help participants obtain a career in the growing healthcare field. The WorkPlace's Health CareerRx Academy is a broad partnership of healthcare providers, educators, trainers, and community-based organizations in Southwestern Connecticut. Designed with input from employers, HCA's mission is to meet the current and evolving workforce needs of healthcare employers. The HCA provides occupational training, work readiness, and other supports to individuals who desire to begin or advance a career in healthcare. All training by HCA leads to a certificate or degree and prepares individuals to pass a state or national licensing exam.

The HCA provides tuition assistance and other supports to help people build a career. Participants have access to career readiness and personal growth classes and seminars. Upon completion, participants can move into occupational skills training in a variety of healthcare related fields. Program participants residing in Southwestern Connecticut receiving TANF, meeting program requirements, impacted by a layoff or position elimination may also be eligible for comprehensive support services and access to internship opportunities and job placement assistance.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

A Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) funded by the U.S. Department of Labor under Title V of the Older Americans Act enables the provision of job skills training to low-income Individuals, age 55 and older. SCSEP participants are placed in temporary training assignments where they receive valuable on-the-job work experience and training needed to gain meaningful employment. Participants will work 20 hours a week at the training sites for which they will be paid minimum wage.

Program goals include:

- assisting participants in acquiring marketable jobs skills;
- helping participants secure meaningful unsubsidized employment program objectives;
- participating in community service assignments to learn new skills in on the job training;
- assisting participants with résumé development;
- assisting in developing job search skills;
- increasing opportunities to obtain jobs in the private sector;
- referring participants to supportive services as needed; and
- changing stereotypes about older workers through public education and demonstrated success

The WorkPlace has branded the SCSEP program as *MaturityWorks*. During the most recent program year *MaturityWorks* provided services to over 350 participants experiencing severely limited employment prospects and having on average nearly 3 significant barriers to employment. Significant barriers to employment may include but are not limited to, lacking a substantial employment history, basic skills, and/or English-language proficiency, lacking a high school diploma or the equivalent or experiencing mental and physical impairments,

homelessness or persistent unemployment. The median earnings for participants placed in employment through *MaturityWorks* was \$3,339.

Workforce Alliance, Inc. - South Central Connecticut's Workforce Development Board **Hospitality Pipeline Training**

The Hospitality Pipeline training program seeks to begin to build an industry pipeline for the hospitality industry. This project offers an important opportunity to enhance employment-focused services and system capacity for the public workforce system in meeting the fast-growing needs of this sector. Participants will explore careers and career pathways in the hospitality industry as well as receive industry recognized credentials. Career pathways include Food Service operations, convention and event management, and lodging operations.

Skill Up for Manufacturing

The Skill Up for Manufacturing program is a five- week training program run in conjunction with area Community Colleges. Advanced training will initially be offered in areas of Welding, Mechatronics and Plastics. Additionally, grant funds will be used to provide guidance and technical assistance to select school districts in the region as they develop pre-apprenticeship training in manufacturing. This program seeks to begin to build an industry pipeline for the manufacturing industry. This project offers an important opportunity to enhance employment-focused training and system capacity for the public workforce system and its education and industry partners in meeting the fast-growing needs of this sector. Funding, provided by the State of Connecticut Bond Commission, and supplemented with Workforce Alliance WIOA formula funds, will be used to provide entry level and advanced manufacturing skills training, technical assistance to area schools and project support. Additional school districts in the region will offer expanded pre-apprenticeship training through the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative.

Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work is an initiative where individuals with disabilities who are on Social Security Disability Benefits and who are able to work, are encouraged and provided incentives to do so. The savings differential based on earnings and savings from SSA are passed on as a reimbursement to Workforce Alliance in unrestricted funds.

Listen for Good

Listen for Good is a research project, developed with financial support from the Fund for Shared Insight, a private foundation seeking to improve customer outcomes. Workforce Alliance was awarded \$30,000 to design, develop and conduct customer service and customer feedback instruments and use the findings to improve the jobseeker experience in their American Job Centers in the region.

Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA)

The Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) awarded Workforce Alliance \$100,000 to assist participants in addressing unique barriers to employment. The grant provides funds to remove barriers to employment, which typically are unpaid training costs, transportation, childcare, and work-related necessities (uniforms, tools, etc.).

Health Careers Advancement Project

The Health Careers Advancement Project provides opportunities for TANF recipients and other low income individuals to enter and advance along four health career pathways through a) work-readiness and contextualized basic skills boot camp; b) occupational skills training resulting in a community college certificate; c) intensive, person-centered case management and other supportive services; d) work-based learning opportunities; and e) job placement assistance. Funding was awarded competitively to the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, in collaboration with Workforce Alliance and the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board. This contract period is renewed annually with a start date each period of October 1.

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Summer Youth Employment

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Summer Youth Employment Program provides summer employability skills to youth age 14-21 that are determined to be in the care and custody of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. The youth are referred from DCF to Workforce Alliance for services. The program offers work experience or work-based

learning at both private and public sector worksites. The youth are supported during participation by individuals who provide case management, mentoring, guidance and counseling. Academic enrichment and financial literacy may also be offered, and an effort will be made to connect these youth to other year-round activities and services provided by Workforce Alliance and the American Job Centers.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) funding assists veteran families at risk of homelessness to maintain their housing and to rapidly re-house veteran families who have recently become homeless. This Veterans' Administration funded program provides case management to support housing stability, education, and job placement. Those in need of more comprehensive workforce development services are linked with a Career Advisor in the American Job Centers. Also included are coordination and linkages to VA benefits, transportation assistance, rental assistance, and legal services. This grant was awarded on a competitive basis.

TechHire - ITXpress

TechHire, known locally as ITXpress, was launched in the fall of 2016. It is a USDOL national discretionary grant, which is focused on serving young adults aged 17-29, and incumbent workers, to prepare them for careers and career advancement in the Information Technology sector. A variety of training modalities will be utilized, including classroom training, online learning, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships and internships. This grant will operate for four years and feature a high level of sector involvement from area employers. This program will end in June, 2020 with a potential of a one year no-cost extension.

Pre-Employment and Training Services (PETS)/Level Up

The Pre-Employment and Training Services (PETS)/Level Up initiative is a grant from the State of Connecticut, Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), designed to provide workshops for in-school youth with disabilities. The workshops will provide instruction in work readiness, labor market information, career pathways and other relevant topics. This program is reimbursed on a fee-for-service basis and also leverages the assets of other funding sources through the American Job Center and its partners. Vendors were procured through a competitive bidding process.

Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB)

Northwest Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI)

- The Northwest Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI) continues to offer residents of the Northwest region a coordinated system of outreach, recruitment, assessment, case management, and placement for career opportunities in the construction building trades. NCCI, now in its 15th year, works in partnership with the local trade unions and private sector companies to encourage apprenticeship in the construction trades. The system brings together community-based organizations, direct-service providers such as the American Job Center in Waterbury, the local school system, the building trades and other community groups to achieve specific goals. The NCCI also coordinates Asbestos, Lead and HAZWOPER refresher classes for program participants.

NCCI, which operates as a program within the NRWIB, also administers the City of Waterbury's Good Job Ordinance, a local hire ordinance that requires publicly-funded construction contractors and construction-related projects to employ a certain percentage of Waterbury residents on project crews. The NRWIB provides a fee for service function to the City of Waterbury serving as the administrator for its Section 3 HUD programs.

- **YouthBuild**
The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB) received its first \$1.1m dollar YouthBuild Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. YouthBuild

Waterbury provides education and training with a strong pre-apprenticeship component that helps at-risk youth complete high school or state equivalency degree programs, earn industry-recognized credentials, and undergo training to build housing for low-income or homeless individuals and families. The objective of this program is to provide low-income young people the opportunity to learn construction skills through building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people in their neighborhoods. For unemployed young people who left high school without a diploma, YouthBuild Waterbury is an opportunity to reclaim their education, gain the skills they need for employment, and become leaders in their communities. As a competency-based dropout recovery program, we seek to provide a high school education that leads to a diploma for a distinct group of students. YouthBuild Waterbury program participants, between the ages of 16 to 24, come from the under-served community of Waterbury and have previously left or been pushed out of the traditional school system without a diploma. At the time of enrollment, most program participants would be over-aged, under-credited, or both, in order to receive vocational training, counseling, leadership development and an education. The mission of YouthBuild Waterbury is to cultivate collaborative learning communities in which every student has the right to an authentic education, plays a meaningful role in creating positive social change.

All young people, regardless of circumstances, should have access to an education that will prepare them to counter social inequities and realize their full potential. The goal of YB Waterbury is to empower young people to transform themselves and become leaders in their communities. YB Waterbury begins with 'Mental Toughness' an eight-day boot-camp style training designed to assess potential YB Waterbury participants and to provide the candidates with an understanding of the YB Waterbury program. Upon successful completion of Mental Toughness, participants are invited to move on to the classroom and on-the-job training components of the program.

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- **WIOA Demonstration Grant – Retail Industry**
The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board assembled a partnership with the National Retail Federation Foundation, Connecticut Retail Merchants Association and area Adult Education providers to address the region's most pressing workforce needs in the retail industry. This regional collaboration strives to address the employment needs of each town in the Northwest CT region and focuses on those areas with the most concentrated employment needs. This program provides out-of-school youth ages 16-24, with a groundbreaking training and credentialing initiative, designed by the retail industry, to help youth acquire the skills they need to land jobs in the retail industry and advance into promising careers. The following nationally recognized credentialing programs, stackable and transferable across the nation, are available to eligible participants:
 - Customer Service and Sales: a classroom-based, instructor-led program that typically takes 40 hours to complete. The Customer Service and Sales curriculum is designed to help entry-level sales and service associates learn skills related to frontline work in retail or any industry that values customer service and sales skills.
 - Advanced Customer Service and Sales: designed for sales and service associates looking to expand their skills in retail and other sales and service-focused industries. This is a classroom-based, instructor-led program that typically takes 40 hours to complete.

Candidates must earn the basic Customer Service and Sales credential to be eligible for this course.

- **Business Services**

The NRWIB is an aggressive partner in the region's business services team (BST). The BST has relationships with area retailers including CVS and other locally owned retail entities. The Connecticut Retail Merchants Association (CRMA) currently has partnerships developed with several area retailers such as Macy's Department Store, Home Depot, BJ'S Wholesale Club, Target and AT&T Telecommunications Company. Representatives from partner companies have engaged in an Employer Advisory Board which informed CRMA on their curriculum, ensuring the training would prepare graduates for a successful career in the retail industry. These partnerships are leveraged to secure internship slots for participants. Partner employers have committed to give special hiring consideration to those candidates who have achieved these credentials.

- **WIOA Transitional Jobs**

In an effort to sustain the success of our Disability Employment Initiative Program, the NRWIB has earmarked WIOA Transitional Jobs funds to continue improving outcomes for in-school and out-of-school persons with disabilities. This program aims to serve those who are looking to transition into high-quality post-secondary education, career-pathway training programs, career exploration, and the workforce system. Built on the notion that youth with disabilities need added supports and opportunities to develop and learn an internship component is also incorporated. American Job Center (AJC) resources such as Résumé Writing, CTHires and various work-readiness workshops are also available for participants to access. Outreach efforts in the region have led to a significant increase in persons with disabilities using AJC career services, working to land an internship, seeking training, or entering employment. The partnership in this effort includes six local school districts: Waterbury, Watertown, Naugatuck, Torrington, Ridgefield and Region 6. The NRWIB provides funds for an internship program for persons with disabilities for which participants are paid \$14 per hour to participate.

- **Tech Hire - ITXpress**

The NRWIB, in partnership with the South Central workforce board, offers Information Technology (IT) training and career support through the ITXpress program. Funded by a \$4 million TechHire Partnership Grant from USDOL, the program offers training to unemployed and out-of-school young adults (ages 17-29) with barriers. Young adult training focuses on attaining a number of Information Technology credentials including a CompTIA A+ credential. Support services, which often make the difference in being able to remain and participate in training, are also provided under the grant and are awarded on the basis of need and commitment. ITXpress has served 285 young adults, 57 incumbent workers. 195 participants have obtained industry-recognized credentials, 140 participants have obtained employment at companies such as Insurity, QScend, TekSystems, Millennium, and Community Health Network with salaries as high as \$65,000. In support services such as childcare assistance, transportation assistance, short-term internet connection, on-the-job training opportunities and internships/paid work experiences are available to support the program participants.

- **Health Profession Opportunity Grant**

The *Connecticut Health* NRWIB, in partnership with Eastern Workforce Investment Board and Workforce Alliance, offers healthcare job training support funded by a Health Profession Opportunity Grant through the United States Department of Health and Human Services. All potential participants are subjected to a rigorous screening process including a background check, drug testing, and CASAS testing. Upon fulfillment of those requirements, the participant moves on to what is known as the randomization process where they go on to be selected by computer-generated lottery for acceptance into the program. The majority of our participants have completed Patient Care Technician training. Participants have also received credentials as Certified Nurse's Aides, Medical Administrative Assistants, Emergency Medical Technicians and Pharmacy Technicians.

A pool of emergency funds is available to address needs of participants that deviate from standard support services (e.g. childcare, transportation, uniform assistance). In some instances, these funds have been used to assist in rental payment while the participant is actively participating in the program. This practice has proven to greatly impact the success of the program and has been adopted in program development.

- **Ticket to Work**

The NRWIB is a Social Security-approved Ticket to Work "Employment Network". Ticket to Work is a free and voluntary program offered by Social Security that assists people age 18 through 64 who receive Social Security disability benefits and who are interested in returning to work or working for the first time. By participating, a person who is interested in working receives support throughout their journey to financial independence.

Ticket to Work helps persons who receive SSI or SSDI benefits to obtain vocational counseling, training, job readiness, job referrals and other employment support services, free of charge.

Services that NRWIB and the American Job Center can provide to Ticket holders include:

- career counseling
- résumé development and interview preparation
- a wide variety of employment workshops
- referrals to additional services and supports
- job matching and job development
- SSA disability benefits advisement referral
- job accommodations instruction and assistance
- possibility of training through WIOA funds, based on eligibility
- follow-up supports and retention services after employment

Home Works

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB) has developed a program, "Home Works" which helps to address the issue of economic insecurity, lack of employment opportunities, and homelessness in Waterbury. The program provides employment services that assist homeless individuals attain housing and economic self-sufficiency. This program employs an innovative approach that affords individuals and their families the platform they need to pursue economic independence. Funded by the United Way Collaborative, this program provides rent subsidies to get homeless families into housing, coupled with an aggressive employment and training component to keep them there.

As the NRWIB worked with the United Way, Waterbury's Early Childhood Office, New Opportunities, St. Vincent de Paul Place, Salvation Army, the Center for Human Development and others it became clear that an Employment Focused Program with Housing, similar to Honolulu's Rent to Work Program could be replicated here and have a profound impact on the homeless community. In an effort to expand and enhance the program, NRWIB will work closely with the City of Waterbury to establish further

resources. Home Works is designed to address needs and mitigate the barriers to securing and maintaining housing. Our Tenant Based Rental Assistance program coordinates with homeless service providers, emergency/transitional shelters, churches and other community agencies through the media, email, phone, site visits, newsletters, brochures, fliers, etc. to continue to promote the program and inform potential participants. Participants are assigned a dedicated Career Navigator who helps them follow a Housing Employment and Learning Plan (HELP) geared toward gaining and maintaining employment; increasing savings; sustaining a fair market rental unit; and transitioning to affordable housing.

Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative

This program focuses on addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. A regional partnership comprises the following entities: Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation, Northwestern CT Community College, Naugatuck Valley Community College, CT Technical High Schools, Torrington High School, Danbury High School, New Milford High School, and Waterbury high schools along with sixteen employers throughout the northwest workforce region and several business associations and Chambers of Commerce. The project provides separate training programs by creating pipelines for 11th or 12th grade students and individuals 18 years of age or older who are not currently enrolled in 11th or 12th grade.

Training programs available include (but are not limited to):

- Introduction to Manufacturing (7 weeks)
- Introduction to Machinist (30 weeks)
- Fundamentals of Manufacturing Technology
- Engineering Drawing Specifications (8 weeks)
- Manufacturing Process/Precision Machining (8 weeks)

Digital Literacy

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board offers basic computer classes which are open to the public. Classes are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 p to 7:00 p and run for six weeks at the Waterbury American Job Center. Students are given the option of attending all six weeks' worth of classes or selecting the classes they need from the following list: Digital Literacy Orientation, Windows (File) Explorer, Computer Basics, Internet Explorer, Word I, Word II, Word III, Excel I, Excel II, Excel III, PowerPoint I and PowerPoint II.

Connecticut Works to Recover - Employer Friendly Workforce Initiative

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board has created a multi-entry point career pathway designed to increase the number of credentialed counselors and address the needs of its member communities in addressing Connecticut's opioid crisis. Identification of eligible participants at each entry point is geared to address necessary prerequisites to move forward to the next level. This comprehensive training program contains three components: classroom training, clinical apprenticeship opportunities, and documentation of the required number of clinical supervision hours which varies in accordance with education attained by participant. Upon completion of the three components, the successful participant attains pre-requisites for credentials and, where applicable, is prepared for the certification or licensure exam. In harmony with the goals of this program, Connecticut has joined the Employer Friendly Workforce Initiative which aims to prevent substance misuse and recovery support. Recovery Friendly Workplace demonstrates a commitment to creating a Recovery-friendly environment promotes a culture that challenges the stereotypes associated with substance use disorders and enhances workplace safety while improving productivity and profitability by addressing behavioral health issues "head-on". Connecticut engages its local and state partners including the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health Services and Addiction Services, the CT Community for Addiction Recovery and the CT Counselor Certification Board, to deliver training and support to Connecticut's employers regarding substance use disorders.

Work Readiness Boot Camp

The NRWIB worked closely with the State of CT Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to develop a work readiness boot camp. This workshop is designed to enhance opportunities by providing

participants with the proper skills needed to gain employment. This is a dynamic and interactive workshop which encourages the participant to break out of their shell and connect with their classmates and instructor. The topics discussed during training include: first impressions, work expectations and ethics, the value of prioritizing and managing time, appropriate attire, interpersonal skills and many more. This workshop is offered on a monthly basis and all participants must be referred by their career navigator and/or case manager.

Industrial Sewing Program

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB) received an award from the Northwest Building Healthier Communities Fund, a fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, Inc., and developed a program which focuses on addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the Industrial Sewing sector. This regional partnership comprises the following entities: NRWIB, Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, Commercial Sewing, Franklin Products, Northwest CT Chamber of Commerce and New Opportunities, Inc. This unique partnership serves the employment needs of individuals residing in the Greater Torrington and Winsted area. The program provides practice-based training to hone technical and behavioral skills that allows graduates to operate at peak performance on the job as a Sewing Operator. Grant funds are utilized to pay for training and to address participants' barriers to employment such as childcare assistance, transportation and/or other concerns within the parameters of available resources.

Future Bankers Program

This program is designed to motivate and tap into the talent of high-achieving students, providing them a clear and promising career path in the financial services industry. It is a collaborative effort of the Center for Financial Training, area public schools, and local financial services institutions. NRWIB's Future Bankers has also been recognized by the CT State Office of Apprenticeship as a registered pre-apprenticeship program. The Future Bankers Program consists of three online courses designed and offered by the Center for Financial Training. Program curriculum consists of the following: Principles of Banking and Practell: Online Teller Training and Center for Financial Training On-Course Learning Banking Catalog.

Principles of Banking

This course explores the fundamental principles and practices of banking and credit in the United States. The course gives an excellent overview of financial services, including information on human resources, marketing, and ethics. Topics to be covered include: money and interest, negotiable instruments, mortgages, commercial lending, security and ethics, and the role of banking in today's economy.

Practell: Online Teller Training

- gives real-life examples for real-life experiences
- increases customer satisfaction
- reduces training time—gets tellers out to the line faster
- offers over 200 topics on the basics of being a teller, and much more
- provides continuous self-testing of knowledge, topic by topic, and unit by unit
- covers every critical teller responsibility

Center for Financial Training (CFT) Learning Catalog

The CFT/On-Course Learning Banking Catalog offers an annual subscription featuring hundreds of self-paced online courses on pertinent banking topics including regulatory compliance; lending, management, sales and service, insurance and retirement account/planning courses. All courses feature instantly graded exams and students can track course enrollments and completions for this and external programs in their account.

Waterbury Working Cities Challenge

The NRWIB is a partner in a local initiative known as the Waterbury Working Cities Challenge. This project addresses the economic and racial/ethnic inequities that have devalued the once vibrant South End Neighborhood by creating a strong, resident-driven, civic infrastructure, realigning and relocating job training services and revising child care decision-making policies to be more equitable, insuring adequate access for neighborhood residents, children and

families. Focusing on one neighborhood provides an opportunity to advance changes in systems and policies and pilot a resident engagement model that can be replicated in other city neighborhoods. Job training efforts focus on the healthcare sector, namely Certified Nurses' Aide training and employment services. This class is available in Spanish in collaboration with the Academy of Medical Training.

Danbury Working Cities Challenge

This is a city-wide collaborative designed to improve the lives of the 50 percent of Danbury residents who live in poverty or who struggle to make ends meet. It links services across the community to make it easier for households to access the tools they need to improve their economic situations and become a stronger economic force in the city. The goal of the program is to reduce the number of immigrants and people of color who are in poverty by 30 percent within 10 years. The effort evolves through two phases. Phase one focuses on building trust among the diverse cultures in Danbury through a system of language acquisition programs and increasing access to affordable, quality childcare. Reducing these barriers paves the way for phase two, which moves residents who have acquired appropriate childcare and language proficiency into job and educational training programs to improve economic self-sufficiency.

Reentry Council and Collaborative

The NRWIB actively participates on the Northwest CT Reentry Council and Greater Danbury Reentry Collaborative. As Connecticut's prison population continues to decline, reentry supports become an integral part of one's successful reintegration back into the lives of their children, families and communities. Reentry is complex as it touches on every aspect of a person's life. Once an individual is released from prison, challenges can arise with finding assistance around basic needs, housing, employment, mental health and substance abuse supports, and other necessary resources. Identifying resources in a timely fashion is critical to one's overall success. The Reentry Strategy creates a recommended framework to guide comprehensive and coordinated policy development and service delivery systems for people transitioning from jail or prison to communities throughout the state, with the goals of reducing recidivism, improving public safety, saving and more efficiently using taxpayer dollars, and assisting people to return to and stay home.

Capital Workforce Partners - North Central Connecticut's Workforce Development Board Adult

- **National Dislocated Worker Grant**

The National Dislocated Worker grant is a \$5.8 million Federal Trade and Economic Transition grant which enables Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) and the North-Central Connecticut region's American Job Center (AJC) network to address ongoing and emerging workforce and economic challenges by providing training and career services to dislocated workers seeking reentry into the workforce and increasing their skill levels to become competitive for growing or high demand employment opportunities. The grant focuses on two sectors, Manufacturing and Health Care for the period of October 2018 to September 2020.

- **Connecticut Recovers Opioid Grant**

Capital Workforce Partners, in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Labor, was awarded a Connecticut Recovers Opioid grant. A Peer Recovery Navigator will be stationed at the Hartford American Job Center and the Best Chance program will provide pre-manufacturing training at Manchester Community College.

- **Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Second Chance Pilot – BEST Chance**

In 2016 the State of Connecticut chose Capital Workforce Partners as the lead organization to implement the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Second Chance Pilot as a contextualized learning pilot program in Hartford County to reduce unemployment and recidivism rates among soon to be released offenders and ex-offenders in Connecticut. The goal was to help ex-offenders compete in today's labor market by providing relevant training and support to gain good jobs. Specifically, program goals included:

Completion of basic, occupational and advanced training

- Increased earnings and employment
- Reduction of recidivism
- Placement and Retention of employment

The BEST Chance Program is based on the I-BEST, an evidence-based model, designed to provide vocational education combined with contextualized adult basic education, through a partnership of a dozen organizations supporting this comprehensive program.

- Jobs Funnel

The Jobs Funnel was launched as a pilot in Hartford to provide qualified workers opportunities to pursue careers in the construction trades. Jobs Funnels programs now operate in two local workforce areas – north central and northwest – under the aegis of the respective regional WDBs. State-level coordination is provided through the Office of Workforce Competitiveness. State general fund dollars help support Jobs Funnel efforts.

Jobs Funnel services typically include: outreach/recruitment, assessment, case management, pre-employment training, job placement, and retention support services. Since their inception, the various regional funnel initiatives have helped to place more than 4,488 individuals in a variety of construction-related jobs, in both union and non-union settings, and in apprenticeships. The average hourly starting wage for participants who have completed the Jobs Funnel training is approximately \$17-21. The Jobs Funnels are an example of innovative public-private partnerships involving employers, labor, community-based organizations, state and local agencies, non-profits and local funders to address shared objectives.

- **Free to Succeed**

Free to Succeed provides retention services, career advancement planning, and support to former offenders. The program, staffed by two full-time Retention Specialists, is housed at the Hartford American Job Center. Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) is able to leverage the resources of the AJC system to provide job training and placement services. Individuals may be referred to Free to Succeed after being placed into employment by AJC job developers, Best Chance and Jobs Funnel staff, and community partners, or they may enter the program directly.

- **Ticket to Work**

Ticket to Work is an initiative where individuals with disabilities who are on Social Security Disability Benefits and who can work, are encouraged and provided incentives to do so. The savings differential based on earnings and savings from SSA are passed on as a reimbursement to Capital Workforce Partners as unrestricted dollars. An Integrated Resource Team (IRT) staffed by AJC partners often meet to triage the needs of the participating individuals.

- **Listen for Good**

Listen for Good is a research project, developed with financial support from the Fund for Shared Insight, a private foundation seeking to improve customer outcomes. Capital Workforce Partners was awarded \$30,000 to design, develop and conduct customer service and customer feedback instruments and use the findings to improve the jobseeker experience in their American Job Centers in the region. The methodology learned from this initiative will be used in future feedback activities.

- **Hartford Working Cities Challenge (HWC)**

Capital Workforce Partners is an active partner in the initiative led by the United Way of Central Connecticut through funding from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. This is a place based project targeting three neighborhoods, Barry Square, Frog Hollow and South Green. This initiative will create a focused, sustained and urgent effort to increase the

education, skills and employment levels of 700 young adults (ages 16-29) over ten years by leading system change objectives targeted to agencies and employers.

- **East Hartford Working Cities Challenge (EHC)**

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) is an active partner in *East Hartford CONNects (EHC)*, participating on both the EHC Advisory Committee and Task Force. EHC represents East Hartford's initiative as one of five municipalities participating in the Connecticut Working Cities Challenge, organized by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. EHC's purpose is to assist East Hartford residents with career development and educational resources and to foster community engagement.

- **Adult Literacy**

Capital Workforce Partners, working with 35-40 adult education providers in the N. Central CT area is collaborating to support the Capital Area Adult Literacy Network, focusing on workforce development programs and adult education providers accentuating efforts to strengthen coordination between workforce development and adult education. The group is focused on four priorities

1. CWP is embedding some of the improvements that were outlined in a previous meeting of Adult Education providers into its updated American Job Center (AJC) Plan, and also is supporting new piloted adult education/work-readiness preparation services at three AJC sites.
2. CWP convenes quarterly meetings of the American Job Center lead staff with the Adult Education providers to enhance coordination and communications.
3. A 'community of learning' focused on sharing best practices, networking and communications is convened by a group of individuals focused on special topics of benefit to improve adult education and workforce development services and strategies.
4. Additional enhancements to strengthen the system were further noted.
 - Doing more to braiding CTE/Academic Programs with workforce development programs at the local site level (strategic program development)
 - How does adult education better link with the comprehensive system?
 - A number of adult education students do not qualify for AJC-One-Stop services and there is a need for a flexible training fund
 - IBEST Programs: need to be able to think through how adult education and contextualized IBEST options can be brought to scale
 - Pre-readiness boot camps for adult education
 - At each AJC and Adult Education Center have an integrated communications packet of services
 - Use more National External Diploma Program – expand to scale
 - Intake/assessments need to be systemized – too much duplication and redundancy; common forms

- **One Stop Operator**

In 2017, Capital Workforce Partners contracted One Stop Operator Serves for building and maintaining partnerships with WIOA mandated partners. In addition, the Operator builds partnerships with other State agencies and community partners to support the American Job Center's customer needs. The Operator conducts quarterly partners meetings, participates, with CWP, in customer satisfaction surveys, and convenes focus groups with subject matter experts including American Job Center customers. CWP will procure the continued services in March 2020.

- **Hartford Student Internship Program (HSIP)**
HSIP is a 'cornerstone' career and college development strategy for Hartford youth ages 16-21 to prepare at-risk youths for career pathways. CWP, Hartford Public Schools, and the City of Hartford collaborate with community-based organizations and other public/private partners to ensure vulnerable students attending HPS in grades 11-12 will have access to work-based learning opportunities to develop college and career competencies. These skills directly correlate to greater future postsecondary achievement by reducing chronic absenteeism and supporting pathways toward self-sufficiency. In the coming year, CWP will look to expand both the scope and reach of HSIP in order to serve more youth, as well as to provide a more in-depth training component based in the Work-Based Learning Competencies.
- **Summer Youth Employment Program**
SYELP is a regional summer employment program from June to August, with funding through CYEP, CT DCF, the City of Hartford, and Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. It places an average of 1300 youth per year in subsidized employment opportunities. In 2020, SYELP will re-introduce the tiered system, ensuring that youth at every level of employment readiness have access to skill-building opportunities.
- **Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative**

Capital Workforce Partners, the North Central CT Workforce Investment Board, is backbone organization for the **Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative (HOYC)**, a **collective action** effort to improve the life outcomes for the almost 5000 Opportunity Youth (OY), ages 16-24, in Hartford who do not have a high school degree or who have a diploma but are not in school or working.

HOYC OY strategies emphasize: (a) empowering youth leaders, (b) enhancing and expanding effective career pathways, (c) using RBA to inform decision-making, assess progress, and improve methods of evaluation, and (d) engaging in policy and systems alignment to scale up and sustain this work.

HOYC engages membership, establishing commitments to: (a) a common agenda for OY programming, (b) shared measurement, (c) mutually reinforcing activities, and (d) continuous communication. Members of HOYC, align systems and resources to implement successful career pathway programs and Jobs for the Future "Back on Track" interventions: "Enriched Preparation" and "Postsecondary/Career Bridging," which are core to the Opportunity Works program that has become a local and national best practice.

- **Navigation Tool for Young Adult Services**

The Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative (HOYC) and Hartford Generation Work (Gen Work) have identified a systemic need for coordination and navigation; are collectively working toward a coordinated education and training system for youth and adults ages 16-29; and are committed to eliminating duplication of projects and services through collaboration. As such one education and training navigation tool (tool) is in development that meets the needs as identified by each of the two collaboratives. The creation of a navigation tool will better connect individuals to programs that meet their unique needs and eligibility. The Tool will be available on the HOYC website with HOYC and Generation Work branding, and may be linked from other partners' websites such as that of United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut and the United Way 2-1-1 website.

- **Youth Symposium**

CWP organized hundreds of youth, service providers and community members turned out for the Northeast Opportunity Youth conference in Hartford to share inspiration, resources, and

stories and best practices in addressing the needs of Opportunity Youth — at-risk young people aged 18 to 24 not actively engaged in school or the workforce. The programs, including the Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative, are united in partnership as the Y.E.S. Project, a national initiative of America's Promise. Sponsored by State Rep. Toni Walker and co-sponsored by Sen. McCrory and Rep. McGee at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, Connecticut, the November 2019 event highlighted work in Boston, Hartford, New York, Philadelphia and Portland, Maine. CT DOL expressed interest in making the symposium an annual event which may be done in collaboration with CWP. America's Promise supported the event in 2019, but moving forward, CWP may collaborate with CT DOL as they expressed an interest in holding the event annually.

Below are highlights and resources.

Common themes and program elements

- Backbone organization spearheads work; provides funding, training, and support for providers and opportunities for them to meet.
- Career pathways for opportunity youth target occupations identified by employers:
- Seek to identify and meet the “skills gap”
- Identify and work on both individual and systems-level indicators
- Measure outcomes in the short, medium and long term
- Incorporate work-based or project-based learning
- Provide opportunities for self-reflection
- Career pathway partners need structured and regular opportunities to share and discuss information and data.
- Securing stable funding for services remains a challenge for providers and partners. The ability of backbone organizations and coalitions to amplify the value of the work to funders and the philanthropic community is valuable and necessary.

Partnerships

- **Capital Area Pipeline Partnership (CAPP)**
Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) convenes the Capital Area Pipeline Partnership, a unique regional employer-led “partnership of partnerships” representing leaders of sector-specific partnerships and associated strategic partners driving strategy and action in to develop a regional pipeline of job-ready talent to meet employers’ demand for skilled workers, support business growth and promote workers’ financial security. CAPP partners include: Advanced Manufacturing Employer Partnership; Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Health; Jobs Funnel Construction and Transportation Partnership (Jobs Funnel); Capitol Region Council of Governments; Connecticut Business and Industry Association; Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; MetroHartford Alliance; United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut; Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford; Connecticut General Assembly Leadership; Municipal Economic Development Officials.

- **Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (MACH)**

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) co-convenes the *Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (MACH)* with Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford, an employer-led partnership whose purpose is to build a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers to meet the talent needs of North Central Connecticut’s healthcare sector to fill entry-level and middle-skill jobs, and retain and advance productive employees leading to financial security and economic growth.

- **Advanced Manufacturing Employer Partnership (AMEP)**
Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) co-convenes the *Advanced Manufacturing Employer Partnership (AMEP)* with the Connecticut Center for Advanced

Technology, an employer-led partnership whose purpose is to build a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers to meet the talent needs of North Central Connecticut's manufacturing sector to fill entry-level and middle-skill jobs, and retain and advance productive employees leading to financial security and economic growth.

- **Jobs Funnel Advisory Committee**
Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) convenes the Jobs Funnel Advisory Committee. The Jobs Funnel Advisory Committee oversees the development and implementation of partnership opportunities with key stakeholders to lead efforts in all regional Jobs Funnel activities. This includes strategies for job seekers' training and placement in the construction industry sector. The committee's guidance will ensure that the North Central Region's Jobs Funnel initiatives enhance and develop a workforce which is equipped with the necessary skills to enter and advance in the state's construction and related green industry sector.
- **Relocation of the Hartford American Job Center**
Capital Workforce Partners and the Department of Labor are relocating the Hartford American Job Center and are taking a systems-building approach to create a customer-centered and customer-driven service delivery model. This model will provide an innovative delivery of services in that it will be fully integrated by function rather than by provider, e.g., Business Services will be provided by Capital Workforce Partners and the Department of Labor under one umbrella. Additionally, it will seek to provide seamless delivery to its customers through its partner organizations through a shared IT infrastructure and coordination of services.

B. STATE BOARD

Please refer to Section II.b.

- ***i. Membership Roster and Category for State Workforce Board***

Please note that the board structure follows CT State Law and was grandfathered from JTPA, to WIA and WIA to WIOA as an alternative entity. Governor Lamont has also attended the first 2 meetings.

#	Members	Category
1	Garrett Moran, Chair	Business
2	Kellie-Marie Vallieres, Vice-Chair	Business
3	Cliff Asness	Business
4	Peter Bevacqua	Business
5	Cindi Bigelow	Business
6	Marna Borgstrom	Business
7	Oni Chukwu	Business
8	Monette Ferguson	Community Action Agency
9	Kevin Graney	Business
10	Juan Hernandez	Organized Labor
11	Tony Hwang	State and Local Government
12	Margaret Keane	Business
13	Ravi Kumar	Business
14	Ruth Levy	Education
15	Jim Loree	Business
16	Sal Luciano	Organized Labor
17	Judy Olian	Education

#	Members	Category
18	Dave O'Neill	Business
19	Paul Salovey	Education
20	Erika Smith	Business
21	Chris Swift	Business
22	Leslie Torres-Rodriguez	Education
23	Toni Walker	State and Local Government
24	Jay Williams	Community-Based Organization

#	Ex-Officio Members	Category
1	Amy Porter	State Government
2	Beth Bye	State Government
3	Colin Cooper	Business
4	David Lehman	State Government
5	Deidre Gifford	State Government
6	Jeffrey Wihbey	Education
7	Jennifer Widness	Education
8	Josh Geballe	State Government
9	Jordan A. Scheff	State Government
10	Kurt Westby	State Government
11	Maria Pirro-Simmons	State Government
12	Mark Ojakian	Education
13	Melissa McCaw	State Government
14	Miguel Cardona	State Government
15	Peter Denious	Business
16	Scott Gaul	State Government
17	Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor	State Government
18	Timothy Larson	State Government
19	Tom Katsouleas	Education
20	Vannessa Dorantes	State Government

I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The voting members of the Governor's Workforce Council, the State Workforce Board under WIOA, and their professional affiliations, include:

- i. Membership Roster and Category for State Workforce Board***

Please note that the board structure follows CT State Law and was grandfathered from JTPA, to WIA and WIA to WIOA as an alternative entity. Governor Lamont has also attended the first 2 meetings.

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15	Peter Denious	Business
16	Scott Gaul	State Government
17	Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor	State Government
18	Timothy Larson	State Government
19	Tom Katsouleas	Education
20	Vannessa Dorantes	State Government

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Moran	Garrett	former president of Year Up (Chairperson)
Vallieres	Kelli-Marie	Sound Manufacturing (Vice-Chair)
Asness	Cliff	AQR
Bevacqua	Peter	NBC Sports
Bigelow	Cindi	Bigelow Tea
Borgstrom	Marna	Yale New Haven Hospital
Chukwu	Oni	Aventri
Ferguson	Monette	ABCD Inc.
Graney	Kevin	General Dynamics/Electric Boat
Hernandez	Juan	32BJ SEIU
Hwang	Tony	Connecticut Senate District 28

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Moran	Garrett	former president of Year Up (Chairperson)
Keane	Margaret	Synchrony
Kumar	Ravi	Infosys
Levy	Ruth	Region 4 Schools
Loree	Jim	Stanley Black + Decker
Luciano	Sal	Connecticut AFL-CIO
Olian	Judy	Quinnipiac University
O'Neill	Dave	Indeed
Salovey	Peter	Yale University
Smith	Erika	ReNetx
Swift	Chris	The Hartford
Torres-Rodriguez	Leslie	Hartford Public Schools
Walker	Toni	Connecticut Senate District 28
Williams	Jay	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

Workforce development is a key piece of Governor Lamont's agenda. The newly established Governor's Workforce Council is making great strides in bringing together the best minds to advance the state's approach to education and training. The Council includes top executives from companies of all sizes as well as leaders of nonprofits, unions, the legislature, and educational systems. Its makeup is emblematic of the Governor's approach of bringing the public and private sectors together to drive the state's economic growth.

The Governor's Workforce Council will also coordinate among the important stakeholders in the workforce system, including businesses, state agencies, quasi-public and independent entities, boards, councils, and commissions, public and private education and training institutions, workforce development boards, nonprofit institutions, labor unions, and the state's Chief Manufacturing Officer.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

Executive Order #4 requires the Governor's Workforce Council to review the state's workforce development system and submit a report to the governor and the legislature by January 1, 2021 that makes strategic recommendations to improve the state's workforce system in a variety of areas, including better coordination, reducing barriers to training, strengthening the bridge from high school into post-secondary training and education, and emphasizing data-driven outcomes.

This year, the GWC Data and Performance Committee will be establishing new metrics for assessing performance across programs at the ground level.

CTDOL's Employment Services Operations Unit conducts annual case file reviews and onsite monitoring of the Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance (UI) Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) programs in each of the five workforce development regions. These reviews ensure the American Job Centers (AJCs) are providing effective and appropriate services to program participants and are adhering to federal and state program requirements. A formal written monitoring report identifying best practices, areas of concern and findings resulting from the review is generated within thirty days of each on-site review. The Employment Services Operations Unit provides in person technical assistance to AJC Directors, Programs & Services Coordinators and staff to quickly address any deficiencies and ensure the delivery of high quality services that meet the specific reemployment needs and Unemployment Insurance eligibility requirements of program participants.

The Connecticut Departments of Labor (CTDOL), Education (CSDE), and Aging and Disability Services (ADS), will use the primary indicators of performance specified in section 116(b) of WIOA and contained in State Performance Reports to assess the performance of the six core programs. Each program's actual performance will be assessed in relation to the State adjusted

levels of performance and revised State adjusted levels of performance. Connecticut does not have any additional indicators of performance referenced in section 116(b)(2)(B) as part of this Unified State Plan.

This State assessment will utilize quarterly wage records to determine program quality and effectiveness with respect to outcomes including employment rates and median earnings for participants with a social security number that exited from one or more of the six core programs. Also, the average cost of those participants who received career and training services, respectively, during the most recent program year and the three preceding program years will be assessed, while considering relevant economic conditions e.g., unemployment rates and characteristics of participants.

Additionally, CTDOL will use the Local Area Performance Report broken down by local area for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to determine each local area's performance on the primary indicators with respect to local performance targets. This local area data will be used to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement.

In June, 2017, GP 17-01 was issued to provide guidance to local boards for the certification of one-stop centers. It identified State Board certification criteria, provided a certification tool and outlined the certification process.

At least once every three years local boards must assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Local certification teams, representing all one-stop partners, reviewed each one-stop center and made recommendations to the local board regarding the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Based on this review, local boards determine appropriate action to address necessary policy and procedural modifications.

This assessment also provides feedback to the local board which supports the development of local plan goals.

B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

Connecticut's Unified State Plan outlines a four-year strategy for the six core programs:

- Adult Program (Title 1 of WIOA)
- Dislocated Worker Program (Title 1)
- Youth Program (Title 1)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II),
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program – BESB (Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV,) and
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program – BRS (Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV.)

Assessment of these core programs will be done by the respective administrative State agency. Other One-Stop delivery system partner program services included in the Workforce Performance Accountability, Information, and Reporting System that are reportable to USDOL will be assessed annually using outcome measures on the Program Performance Scorecard e.g., employment rate, and median earnings. CTDOL will explore assessment for performance accountability with CTDSS to determine application and feasibility between WIOA, TANF and SNAP E&T.

In June, 2017, GP 17-01 was issued to provide guidance to local boards for the certification of one-stop centers. It identified State Board certification criteria, provided a certification tool and outlined the certification process.

At least once every three years local boards must assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Local certification teams, representing all one-stop partners, reviewed each one-stop center and made recommendations to the local board regarding the effectiveness, physical and

programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Based on this review, local boards determine appropriate action to address necessary policy and procedural modifications.

This assessment also provides feedback to the local board which supports the development of local plan goals.

C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Connecticut will continue to use information collected from the one-stop certification process to assess the state's workforce development system and WIOA core programs.

CT has utilized two mechanisms to conduct assessments of the workforce system. OWC on behalf of the State Board issued policies, gathered and reviewed information, provided feedback and guidance to the local boards and one-stop operators.

1. One-Stop Certification Process

In June, 2017, GP 17-01 was issued to provide guidance to local boards for the certification of one-stop centers. It identified State Board certification criteria, provided a certification tool and outlined the certification process.

At least once every three years local boards must assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Local certification teams, representing all one-stop partners, reviewed each one-stop center and made recommendations to the local board regarding the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Based on this review, local boards determine appropriate action to address necessary policy and procedural modifications.

This assessment also provides feedback to the local board which supports the development of local plan goals.

1. One-Stop System Monitoring

On May 23, 2018, OWC issued GP 18-2 to provide guidance to the local boards for one-stop system monitoring and to distribute the monitoring tool developed in collaboration with local board staff. One-Stop System Monitoring was conducted that year, results were sent to OWC, reviewed and discussed with local boards.

CT will be reviewing and updating these policies and working closely with the GWC to determine action steps to ensure that assessments are conducted on a regular basis and reported to the GWC accordingly.

D. EVALUATION

The State intends to examine potential subject areas to conduct evaluations or research. Any projects will be conducted in collaboration with WIOA partners, including the local workforce development boards. Consideration will be given to past evaluations to ensure that future ones are valuable use of State and local resources. The nature and type of these projects will unfold throughout WIOA implementation and will at a minimum focus on factors effecting program outcomes. Evaluations provided by Federal agencies will also guide the direction of State efforts.

The Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research plans to develop an annual report card on employment and training programs considering an array of programs that are related to one or more of the following four results:

- CT adults who are financially self-sufficient
- CT students ready for work and post-secondary education following high school graduation
- A competitive 21st century CT economy
- A highly skilled, competitive 21st century CT workforce

The production of this report card informs the workforce system so that workforce-related policies, investments, strategies and programs contribute measurably to one or more of the above results.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

CTDOL has created a policy concerning methods/factors to distribute funds to local areas for Youth activities, Adult and training activities, Dislocated Worker employment and training activities. The policy can be found in the CTDOL WIOA Policy Manual. Proposed methods and factors will be reviewed with and approved by for the Governor's Workforce Council.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Through CSDE, the State of Connecticut will award multi-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. Grantees will have the opportunity to continue for a second year depending upon satisfactory performance and funding from Congress. The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE):

- a. a local educational agency;
- b. a community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- c. a volunteer literacy organization;
- d. an institution of higher education;
- e. a public or private nonprofit agency;
- f. a library;
- g. a public housing authority;
- h. other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- i. a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
- j. a partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

CSDE will make funding available in each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas. In conjunction with each WDB, CSDE will help to assess local area needs and WIB goals. In each local area, funds will be divided among defined priorities on a percentage basis. Eligible providers will select the appropriate priority area when drafting and submitting the proposal to CSDE.

CSDE will use the 13 WIOA considerations for funding to award grants, including the following consideration: "past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance", described in WIOA section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy. Past effectiveness will be evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System database and annual reviews of previously funded providers, and evidenced by comparable objective performance measures demonstrating successful student outcomes for new eligible providers.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

CTDOL has created a policy concerning methods/factors to distribute funds to local areas for Youth activities, Adult and training activities, Dislocated Worker employment and training activities. The policy can be found in the CTDOL WIOA Policy Manual. Proposed methods and factors will be reviewed with and approved by for the Governor's Workforce Council.

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW

ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF
DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS

Through CSDE, the State of Connecticut will award multi-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. Grantees will have the opportunity to continue for a second year depending upon satisfactory performance and funding from Congress. The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE):

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- e. a public or private nonprofit agency;
- f. a library;
- g. a public housing authority;
- h. other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- i. a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
- j. a partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

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The State's list of eligible applicants in the State Plan is a closed list. The plan states, "The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)." According to WIOA, an "eligible provider" is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities that may include..." Please revise to correct the definition of eligible provider. Furthermore, please indicate that the multi-year grant competition will be held in accordance with 34 CFR part 463, Subpart C. In addition, please provide a description of the methods or factors the State is using to distribute funds, i.e., geographical design, enrollment, census data, etc. **SDE**

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Response:

Multi-year grants will be awarded based on the ability of the eligible applicant to meet the following AEFLA purposes:

- assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- assist adults who are parents or family members to become a full partner in the education development of their children;
- assist adults in completing high school;
- promote transitions from adult education to postsecondary education and training through career pathways; and

- assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking, comprehension skills in the English language, and acquiring an understanding of American government, individual freedom and responsibilities of citizenship.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants for AEFLA funding must be able to demonstrate effectiveness in providing adult education services to adult learners. Eligible applicants may include the following agencies/organizations:

- a local education agency;
- a community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- a volunteer literacy organization;
- an institution of higher education;
- a public or private nonprofit agency;
- a library;
- a public housing authority;
- other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries or authorities described above; and
- a partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

Demonstrated Effectiveness

An eligible provider must establish that it has demonstrated effectiveness through the following criteria: performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the state's application for funds. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training (34 CFR 463.24).

The following Connecticut state-imposed elements will be used in determining demonstrated effectiveness of eligible training providers:

- credential attainment rate;
- measurable skills gain;
- effectiveness in serving employers;
- median earnings;
- employment rate;
- total number of individuals served; and
- program of study completed.

There are two ways in which an eligible provider may meet the requirements in this section:

1. An eligible provider that has been funded under Title II of the WIOA must provide performance data required under Section 116 of the WIOA to demonstrate past effectiveness. Past effectiveness will be evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) database and annual reviews of previously funded providers.
2. An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of the WIOA must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals in all of the following areas:
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Mathematics
 - English language acquisition
 - Other subject areas relevant to the services

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, the Connecticut State Department of Education will publish a *Notice of Availability* in all major newspapers throughout Connecticut and post the notice on the CSDE's web page. The RFP will be mailed to all local education agencies and higher education institutions; to a master list of current and past providers including community-based organizations, regional education service centers, housing authorities, volunteer organizations, Department of Correction, other correctional facilities and institutions; and to all current providers and WDBs. A Bidder's Conference will be publicly advertised with the *Notice of Availability* and held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Under the Rehabilitation Act, the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) provides vocational services to eligible individuals with disabilities who are seeking to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind (BESB). Federal Title IV funds are distributed at a rate of 85 percent of the appropriation applied to the VR General Program and 15 percent allocated to the VR Blind Program. For the state match appropriation, funding is applied at a rate of 88 percent to VR General Program and 12 percent to the VR Blind Program. Factors that contribute to the application of these funding allocations includes consideration of the number of consumers served within each program, maintenance of effort requirements, programmatic and purchase of service costs, and staffing requirements to maintain each program. Flexibility is built into the state appropriation to allow for adjustment in the allocation percentages to each program in response to variations in these variables.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Connecticut has developed a Unique ID system with the WIOA core partners. The primary purpose of the Unique ID system was to create a Unique ID that would be used for federal reporting as well as integrating data from the WIOA core programs. WIOA, Adult Education, Wagner Peyser and Vocational Rehabilitation have been using the Unique ID for the past 2 program years.

Connecticut is working on a database that will store the PIRL from all WIOA Core partners quarterly and annually. The database will allow Connecticut to compare the data from the four core WIOA programs. In comparing the files Connecticut can determine which customers are served by multiple programs, success rates for those served by multiple programs, indicators a person is likely to participate in more than one program, which Workforce Development Boards are more successful at integrating services.

Connecticut currently has an integrated web-based data system for four of the six core programs and includes the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program. Connecticut is looking for integrated system options as they become available in the near future.

In addition, the GWC has created a Data Performance and Planning Committee that is examining performance and outcomes. Currently, this committee is:

- **Reviewing legal agreements for an expanded state integrated data system.**
- **Expansion of P20-WIN to supportive service agencies.**
- **Preparing an outline for dashboard and data requirements.**
- **Preparing a program inventory.**
- **Seeking community input through a Resident Advisory Board.**

Connecticut is hopeful of aligning technology and data systems across mandatory One-Stop partner programs under the direction of our new Governor and his Administration. This future system would provide for a common intake and data collection across multiple agencies and programs. This alignment would improve service delivery to individuals by enabling data to be collected once and shared by service providers within the system, resulting in efficiencies. This common system would also foster communication and collaboration among service providers to ensure optimum service delivery using a variety of funding and resources while minimizing duplication of services. The Governors Workforce Council (GWC) will assist the Governor and Agency Commissioners in finding ways to align technology and data systems to improve service delivery by participating on interagency work groups to identify financial and other resources necessary to accomplish this work. By working with the State's Data Officer and the GWC Data and Performance Committee, experts will identify financial and programmatic actions necessary to accomplish this work.

Connecticut had formed a WIOA transition interagency work group on Technology, Data and Outcomes. The work group and its technology subcommittee met several times to develop various options to enable reporting for the six (6) core programs across three state agencies – the Connecticut Departments of Labor (CTDOL), Education (CSDE), and Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS). Data collection for the six core programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) occur within separate case management systems located at each of three State agencies. CTDOL will explore assessment for performance reporting with CTDSS to determine application and feasibility between WIOA, TANF and SNAP E&T.

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three State agencies for each of the six core programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it does exist, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six core programs, and that this identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of the six core programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

Also, these same electronic files will be used to obtain employment information for each program participant who has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six core programs. CTDOL currently is responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for individuals who exit in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies to use in their federal report submissions.

Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Performance Report

CTDOL will use the new CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in programs, and on WIOA participants as required under WIOA.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers Report

CT DOL will assume the role as lead agency in the Effective in Serving Employers Report.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) will use the program performance scorecard and the WIOA Annual Statewide Performance Report Template to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs in

entering or remaining in employment. The state assessment will use quarterly wage records to determine entered employment rates in the second and fourth quarters after exit for program individuals who exit with social security numbers to determine their success in entering or remaining in employment. Median earnings will also be considered to determine progress towards self-sufficiency. Local Workforce Development Boards will be responsible for following up with participants exiting from the WIOA Youth program to assess enrollment in, persistence in, and completion of postsecondary education. Connecticut has not set any additional indicators of performance.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Response: the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), adult education programs must collect data on program participants for the primary indicators of performance. These indicators include "Post-exit Performance Indicators."

The performance indicators are follow-up indicators that are collected after participants exit. These measures are (1) employment in the second quarter after exit, (2) employment in the fourth quarter after exit, (3) median earnings of participants who are employed in the second quarter after exit, and (4) the credential indicator. The credential indicator includes two credentials: attainment of a secondary school diploma and attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential. However, the secondary school diploma only counts if the participant is either (a) employed within 1 year of exit or (b) enters into postsecondary education or training program within 1 year of exit. The secondary diploma component of the credential indicator applies only to participants without a secondary diploma or equivalent who enter at or advance into a secondary program of study (i.e., the ninth-grade equivalent level or higher). The recognized postsecondary attainment credential component of the credential indicator applies only to participants who are also enrolled in a postsecondary education or training program, including those who are enrolled in an integrated education and training (IET) program, as defined under WIOA. Attainment of the postsecondary credential must be achieved while the participant is enrolled or within 1 year of exit.

ADS-BRS

For BESB, data that is available for Program Year 2017 indicates that 51 individuals out of 60 that had an employment outcome were still working in the second quarter post exit, reflecting an 85% retention rate. In the fourth quarter post exit, 47 of these individuals were still working, reflecting a 78% retention rate.

For BRS, data that is available for Program Year 2017 indicates that 996 individuals out of 1,292 that had an employment outcome were still working in the second quarter post exit, reflecting an 77% retention rate. In the fourth quarter post exit, 927 of these individuals were still working, reflecting a 71% retention rate.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

The electronic files containing records for the six core programs will be used to obtain employment information using Unemployment Insurance Wage Record data for each program participant that has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six core programs. CTDOL is currently responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for individuals who exit in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL will continue this work and expand its responsibilities to include individuals who exit from all six core programs. Therefore, CTDOL will append wages and employment information to each exiter's record. MOU's have been established with the other agencies to limit the use of wage records to the proscribed purposes and ensure that proper security will be in place to protect confidentiality.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, and wages, will be returned to each of the three State agencies for use in their federal report submissions. Also, CTDOL uses the CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in program and on WIOA participants, as required under WIOA. CTDOL will use Unemployment Insurance Wage data for employment rates, median earnings, and credential rates for all students in a program on the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report.

Unemployment Insurance Wage Record data will also be used to comply with federal evaluation requirements, and to inform workforce and labor market information available to customers.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Connecticut Department of Labor

- Information on individuals referenced for purposes of the WIOA Core Programs in the Connecticut Department of Labor's automated One-Stop Career-Center system (CTHIREs) is considered confidential Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and may not be released or used for any purpose other than one directly connected with the administration of the programs. Information may also be released when the participant authorizes disclosure.
- Access to the system is provided upon an entity's entrance into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Connecticut Department of Labor, which acknowledges the confidentiality and security requirements associated with the system. Moreover, every individual accessing the system must first sign an Acknowledgment of Confidential Information form, to ensure each individual is aware of such requirements.
- Finally, access to network components comprising the System is limited to authorized administrators, to ensure no unauthorized disclosure of PII. The system itself is configured to comply with Federal and State of Connecticut laws and regulations regarding the protection of confidential and PII, including but not limited to all sections of NIST SP 800-53 and IRS Publication 1075.

Connecticut State Department of Education

CSDE will ensure that program providers are compliant with all applicable laws and RFP guidelines including ADA 504 and Section 427 GEPA.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. Sec. 4215, the State will ensure that veterans and eligible spouses are given priority for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under any job training program funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Labor. A veteran or eligible spouse will therefore take precedence over a non-covered person if otherwise eligible to participate and receive services under the program. Depending on the type of service, a covered person shall have access earlier in time or, if resources are limited, instead of a non-covered person. For a service such as classroom training, priority of service will be applied to the selection process, up to the point at which an individual is both approved for funding and accepted or enrolled. As such, a veteran or eligible spouse would be moved to the top of any waiting list used for the formation of the class; once a non-covered person has been approved for funding and is accepted or enrolled, he or she may not be displaced by a veteran or eligible spouse who is subsequently identified.

American Job Center staff is regularly trained on the protocols for implementing priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses, which includes training on the definition of covered persons and how priority of service is applied. Visible signage, placed prominently at or near the front desk, alerts AJC customers about priority of service provisions and encourages them to reveal their status as soon as possible.

AJC management ensures that priority of service is provided to all covered persons, which includes:

- any veteran who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and was discharged or released from service under any condition other than a condition classified as dishonorable, including those in Reserve and National Guard units activated for Federal Service; and
- any person qualifying as an "eligible spouse" on the basis of any of the following:
 - A spouse of any veteran who died of a service-connected disability;

- A spouse of any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days: missing in action; captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power; and
- A spouse of any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or a veteran who died while such a disability was in existence.

Spousal eligibility derived from a living veteran or service member would end if the veteran or service member loses the status that is the basis for eligibility, as it would in the case of divorce from the veteran or service member; however, a spouse who qualifies on the basis of a deceased veteran would not lose covered status through subsequent remarriage.

Front desk and other AJC staff working with customers are trained to inquire about military service performed by either the customer or the customer's spouse. Individuals who self-identify as a veteran or eligible spouse may receive access to appointment slots before non-covered persons and, when resources are limited, instead of non-covered persons. Where registration for a workshop is full, a seat will be made available for a veteran or covered person who wants to attend, an accommodation not extended to non-covered persons.

Individuals who fully register in CTHires are identified as veterans or eligible spouses based on their responses to required system intake prompts, and they receive a priority-of-service advisory upon completing the registration process. AJC staff members also utilize a triage form to identify customers who may not have fully registered, which helps assess whether an individual has significant barriers to employment (SBEs) or other characteristics that would qualify for one-on-one job search assistance from a Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist. In such cases, the individual is either promptly referred or scheduled for an appointment. DVOPs receive an email alert whenever a veteran or eligible spouse with an SBE self-registers in CTHires. DVOPs are trained to contact these individuals to inform them of JVSG and AJC services and offer to set up an appointment.

Veterans receive reemployment services from trained staff at AJCs throughout the state, which include five comprehensive centers and several smaller, affiliate locations. Every comprehensive AJC conducts monthly *Veterans' Employment Connection* orientations that brief veterans about priority of service, SBE categories, employer connections, and how to best work with DVOPs or other AJC staff in the region. Participants are also advised about aspects of CTHires' job search functionality, which includes a 24-hour veteran hold on job postings. Business Services Representatives and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives collaborate on coordinating employer outreach and job development activities, informing employers about the benefits of hiring veterans, and identifying employers who are interested in hiring veterans. They also advise federal contractors about the requirements of the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to provide hiring preference to veterans and promote the hiring of veterans.

Ongoing monitoring of the AJCs will ensure that signage remains visibly posted and regular staff training is provided on priority of service, SBE identification, and the DVOP referral process. Program operators will be monitored for evidence that first consideration for participation was given to those veterans and eligible spouses who met the eligibility criteria for that program and, in cases where resources were limited, that no such covered persons were turned away in favor of a non-covered person. The State will also ensure that websites include language advising visitors of the veterans' priority of service provisions with regard to workforce programs, and that such information is included in contracts, sub-contracts, solicitations for grant awards, sub-grants, memoranda of understanding, and other service provision agreements to ensure compliance with priority of service by sub-recipients.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Connecticut's One-Stop system currently provides and will continue to ensure physical and programmatic access to facilities, programs, services technology and materials for individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. With respect to physical accessibility, all five of Connecticut's comprehensive One-Stop American Job Centers, along with the Danielson American Job Center, are designated ADA-compliant. Assistive technology is available to assist jobseekers with disabilities in each of the comprehensive American Job Centers. These technologies include electric adjustable workstations, large screen visual magnifiers, JAWS screen reader software, TTY lines for deaf or hard of hearing customers, and large-font computer keyboards in the Career Center. In addition, efforts are underway to explore how NVDA software could be installed and managed on the public career center computers in the comprehensive American Job Centers. All five comprehensive American Job Centers provide adequate public parking for individuals seeking to use the facilities and have been determined to provide adequate accessible parking options for jobseekers with disabilities. Each of the comprehensive American Job Centers is located on a public bus route.

Individuals seeking unemployment-related information or services will be assisted by a full-time CTDOL Unemployment Insurance staff expert located at and providing service from the front desk in each of the five comprehensive American Job Centers. These staff unemployment experts will be able to process paper unemployment claims directly, in-person, for jobseekers with disabilities who may have difficulty filing applications over the phone or via the Internet.

MEMO: GP 17-01

DATE: June 8, 2017

TO: Chief Elected Officials
Workforce Board Chairs
Workforce Board Directors
Commissioner Jackson, CTDOL
Commissioner Porter, CT DORS
Commissioner Wentzell, CT SDE
Commissioner Bremby, CT DSS

FROM: Kathleen Marioni
Executive Director
Office of Workforce Competitiveness

SUBJECT: One-Stop Certification

REFERENCES: WIOA Sections 101(d)(6), 121 (e)(2), 121(g)(1)

REFERENCES

Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, WIOA Section 101(d)(6), 121(e), and 121(g)(1).

WIOA specifies in section 101(d)(6) and 121(g)(1) that the State Board, shall establish minimum criteria for certification of one-stop career centers and one-stop delivery systems. At least once every three years, local workforce development boards (LWDBs) must assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of one-stop career centers and the one-stop delivery system using the criteria established by this policy. Local boards must certify that their one-stop career centers and one-stop delivery system meets the minimum standards established by this policy. Local boards not in compliance with this policy shall be ineligible to receive one-stop infrastructure funding.

PURPOSE

To provide guidance for the certification of one-stop centers to be conducted by local workforce development boards (LWDBs), and to set criteria for the development of a local policy for one-stop certification.

BACKGROUND

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) specifies in section 101(d)(6) and 121(g)(1) that the State Workforce Development Board establish the minimum criteria for certification of one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system.

Certification is required to be done by local boards at least once every three years in order for one-stop centers and the one-stop delivery system to receive infrastructure

funding. In part, the WDBs must certify that the WIOA core program services – Title 1, adult, dislocated worker and youth, Title II – adult education and literacy, Title III – Wagner Peyser, and Title IV – vocational rehabilitation must be available or accessible at comprehensive one-stop centers. The following principles underlie one-stop certification:

- **Integrated – Think and act as an integrated system of partners that share common goals with services delivered by various organizations with the best capabilities for a seamless customer experience.**
- **Accountable** – Committed to high quality customer services with regular program performance review based on shared data and actions that enhance outcomes.
- **Universal Access** – Meet the needs of customers by ensuring universal access to programs, services, and activities for all eligible individuals.
- **Continuous Improvement** – Create a delivery system that utilizes feedback from employers and job seekers to challenge the status quo and innovates to drive measurable improvements.
- **Partnership** – Align goals, resources, and initiatives with economic development, business, labor and education partners.
- **Regional Strategy** - Work with counterparts to address broader workforce needs of the regional economy and leverage resources to provide a higher quality and level of services.

POLICY

1.

a. One-Stop Center Certification Criteria

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) must use the attached checklist for One-Stop certification developed on behalf of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) as guidance in the development of the Board's local policy. The CETC, in consultation with local Chief Elected Officials and LWDBs, will review and update the one-stop certification criteria included in this checklist every two years as part of the review and modification of the WIOA State Plan.

LWDBs can establish additional criteria and set higher standards for service coordination than those set by the State. If they do, they must also review and update those additional criteria and standards every two years as part of the WIOA Local Plan update process

The LWDB one-stop certification policy must be submitted to OWC by August 1, 2017.

1. Certification Process

WIOA requires that there must be at least one physical one-stop career center in each local area. Additional locations may also provide access to workforce system services and may include specialized centers serving targeted populations, such as youth or dislocated workers, or industry-specific centers. To achieve the goal of increased access, Connecticut recognizes two levels of sites that can be certified within the one-stop service delivery system, a comprehensive service center or an affiliate site with partial services. For purposes of initial certification, one comprehensive site in each of Connecticut's five workforce development areas must be certified.

Comprehensive Site - Minimum Requirements

- Accessible to the general public during regular business days, as well as physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Portal site for electronic access (CT Hires)
- Provider of **basic and individualized career services, and training services**
- **Provider of business services**
- Representation of **four** mandated partners (WIOA Titles I-IV)
- Additional related employment and training resources

Affiliate Site – Minimum Requirements

- Accessible to the general public and physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Portal site for electronic access (CT Hires)
- Provider of **basic career services**
- Representation of **one** or more mandated partners
- Additional related employment and training resources
- Established working relationship as part of an integrated system of American Job Center (AJC) sites

Certification as a Comprehensive Center or Affiliate site must, at a minimum, have the elements identified under each category above.

1.

a. Certification Teams

One-stop certification teams will be established by LWDBs and are responsible for conducting independent and objective evaluations of one-stop sites and making certification recommendations to LWDBs. One-stop certification teams are comprised of LWDB members, individuals who represent required partners and must include a staff member from the Office of Workforce Competitiveness.

Certification teams may utilize experts from the state level or outside of the local area to ensure evaluations are objective. They should also utilize local experts who represent targeted populations but have no financial ties with the one-stop site.

1.

a. Certification Checklist

The attached checklist must be used in the development of the LWDB policy regarding certification. The Local Workforce Development Board Certification Team will conduct a site visit to determine the status of certification. Following the site visit, interviews, and final responses to any follow up questions, the LWDB will provide a written response to OWC within 45 days indicating one of three outcomes:

1.

a.

- i. Certification granted
- ii. Provisional Certification with plan and timeline for meeting standards
- iii. Not Certified

1.

a. Certification Determinations

The LWDB will render written determinations within 45 days of conducting one-stop site evaluations. There are three possible determinations: (1) certification, (2) provisional certification with a requirement that one-stop operators provide action plans and timelines for meeting certification standards, and (3) not certified or decertified.

Provisional certifications must be accompanied by detailed description of the issues/concerns identified so one-stop operators have sufficient information around which to develop required action plans and timelines.

A determination to not certify a one-stop site must be accompanied by a detailed description of the deficiencies, including an explanation as to why the certification team believed the deficiencies could not be addressed or resolved provisionally.

1.

a. One-Stop Certification Frequency

One-stop sites will be evaluated and certified by the LWDB no less than once every three years.

1.

a. **Non-Certification**

If an existing comprehensive one-stop site is ultimately not certified following a standard or “for-cause” evaluation, the LWDB and one-stop operator must have a plan to ensure continuity of service between the time a site is not certified and a new one-stop operator is procured.

1. **CERTIFICATION TIMELINE**

Certification must be completed by the local board prior to December 1, 2017.

1. **CERTIFICATION CRITERIA**

In order to be certified, one-stop centers must meet at a minimum the standards established in Attachment I and in the local Board policy.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

As one component of the process of establishing certification criteria for One-Stop centers statewide, the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) were required to document that each One-Stop center in their respective regions meets the service needs of English language learners. The principle of ensuring accessibility is a priority focus in the Workforce Council’s oversight of the statewide workforce system.

The State of Connecticut contracts with several separate entities to provide interpretative /translation services for English Language Learners. Services range from oral to written translation and in person or telephonic interpretation. CTDOL service providers are encouraged to follow the CT DOL LAP Policy. Procedures for obtaining interpretive services are listed on CT DOL’s Intranet and are accessible to all staff.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

WIOA joint planning and coordination across programs in CT began in 2014 following passage of this Act and continues today. Many informational meetings, presentations, etc. were held across CT by state and local partners. Several workgroups were formed and some continue today as described in previous sections.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) has lead responsibility for coordinating production of Connecticut’s WIOA Unified State Plan. OWC has relationships with key senior staff from WIOA required partners and those individuals have shared their knowledge and expertise to the planning and production of the Unified State Plan. In addition, OWC conducted outreach to other “optional” partners and many responded with new ideas and plans for further coordination of services for our customers.

Department of Aging and Disability Services

The Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind (BESB) have lead responsibility for developing the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program content for Connecticut’s Unified State Plan. OWC staff met and conferred with BRS and BESB staff on several occasions to review the status of Unified State Plan drafting and Title IV planning, to ensure alignment of focus and content during the drafting and production process.

ADS posted a draft of its Title IV plans for public comment. The State Rehabilitation Councils and Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired approved those sections of the plan, which was then received and reviewed by OWC. A joint effort between OWC and ADS staff integrated the Title IV content into the Unified State Plan draft, including intended coordination of implementation efforts going forward. As with the Title II program, the Unified State Plan specifically addresses coordination of Vocational Rehabilitation Program services for individuals and employers, and coordinated engagement with the education system and economic development efforts.

State Board of Education – Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

On July 31, 2018, President Trump signed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act into law. This bill amends the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) and this amended act is now referred to as Perkins V. The passage of Perkins V provides new opportunities to improve Career and Technical Education (CTE) and enables more flexibility for Connecticut to meet the unique needs of our learners, educators, and employers. In August 2018, Connecticut elected to submit a one-year CTE

Transition Plan for the 2019–20 school year, with full implementation of the CTE State Plan under Perkins V in the 2020–21 school year covering fiscal years 2020–23.

Connecticut’s vision for CTE is that all Connecticut’s students have access today to high-quality, culturally responsive guidance, teaching, and learning that will position them to graduate tomorrow as innovators equipped with adaptable, transferable skills that will contribute to the growth of Connecticut’s high-knowledge economy.

The CSDE’s vision demands that all Connecticut’s students have access today to flexible CTE pathways that will position them to graduate tomorrow as innovators equipped with adaptable, transferable skills that will contribute to the growth of Connecticut’s high-knowledge economy.

Connecticut’s vision for education and workforce development demands schools, districts, and community colleges design rigorous pathways and programs of study from a perspective of bold innovation that fosters deep and long-lasting changes.

This new understanding of CTE, based upon collaborative partnerships, will result in students graduating with the essential knowledge, skills, and employability expertise to successfully meet the demands of Connecticut’s expanding economy.

The CSDE collaborates with outside agencies in order to braid funding, ensure cohesiveness among programs, and educate the whole child from preK–12. Interaction between programs and staff generate improved services to students, schools, and LEAs. This comprehensive thinking locates the intersections and weaves together the strategies, timelines, and funding sources from the multiple programs in order to achieve a cohesive vision.

Furthermore, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Perkins V goals align to Title IV, Part B in which 21st Century School programs can partner with in-demand fields of the local workforce or build career competencies and career readiness. This funding may provide workforce development boards with additional opportunities to collaborate and leverage resources for in-school youth services. Continued coordination with these programs will help to unify CSDE guidance.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

**VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS
PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND
YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B**

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Connecticut has five workforce development regions in the state. They include the Eastern CT region, administered by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, the Central region administered by Capital Workforce Partners, the South Central region administered by The Workforce Alliance, the Northwest region administered by the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, and the Southwest region administered by The Workplace. Please also see attached map.

In May, 2015, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness issued policy and procedures to chief elected officials for the initial designation of local workforce development areas, including the requirements of "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" as defined in WIOA. Requests for designation were required to be submitted by the existing local areas' chief elected official on behalf of the area's local elected officials. CT DOL staff subsequently reviewed requests and chief elected officials were notified of designation by OWC.

The term "performed successfully" with respect to a local area means the local area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) (or if applicable, core indicators of performance described in section 136(b)(2)(A) of WIOA of 1998, as in effect the day before enactment of this Act) for each of the last 2 consecutive years for which data was available preceding the determination of performance under this paragraph.

For determining initial and subsequent designation under 679.250(a) and (b), the term "sustained fiscal integrity" means the Secretary has not made a formal determination that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the area misexpended funds due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration for the two year period preceding the determination.

WIOA Local Area Designation - Appeals Process

Pursuant to Section 106(b)(5) of WIOA and 20 CFR 683.630, if the State denies designation of a local area, the chief elected official(s) may appeal the decision through the following appeals process:

Within 14 days from the date of receipt of the notice of denial, the chief elected official(s) may file an appeal to the State Workforce Development Board by submitting in writing the following information:

- A statement that the chief elected official(s) is appealing the denial of designation;
- The reason(s) why the local area should be designated; and
- Signature(s) of the chief elected official(s).

The appeal shall be submitted in writing.

Pursuant to 20 CFR 679.290(b) and 20 CFR 683.630 (a), the State Board will provide the parties with the opportunity for a hearing, review the appeal, and make a ruling on the appeal within 60 days after the submission of the appeal. The State Board shall notify the chief elected official(s) in writing, of its decision on whether or not to approve the designation of an area as a local area under section 106(b)(3) of WIOA and 20 CFR 679.250.

In the event the State Board denies the appeal or fails to issue a decision within 60 days of the date the appeal is submitted, the chief elected official(s) may further appeal the State Board's decision or lack thereof to the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). Pursuant to 20 CFR 683.640, appeals made to USDOL must be filed no later than 30 days after the receipt of the written notification of denial from the State. The appeal must be submitted by certified mail, with return receipt requested, to the following address:

Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210,

The CT appeals process is within the following policy:

Connecticut Department of Labor WIOA Policy One-Stop Center Infrastructure Cost-Sharing Agreements

1. Purpose: This Issuance conveys guidance for Local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), and one-stop center Required Partners to manage creation of a local infrastructure cost-allocation agreement (IFA). The deadline for advising the State of an impasse in completing the agreement is given, as is the deadline for submission of infrastructure budgets. Procedures are discussed whereby a State determined infrastructure-cost allocation mechanism would be triggered if a local agreement is not reached prior to the State deadline. The appeals process for disputing the contribution required of a one-stop partner by such a State mechanism is described.

2. Background: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires local WDBs to develop and finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among itself and its Required Partners, with the agreement of the Chief Elected Official, for the Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA). The MOU coordinates operation of the local one-stop delivery system, provision of programs and services, and apportionment of costs. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) previously issued initial IFA and MOU guidance, GP 17-02.

WIOA requires that the MOU include details on how the Local WDB, CEO, and one-stop center Required Partners will fund one-stop infrastructure costs for all comprehensive one-stop centers in the local area. It is recommended that any infrastructure cost-sharing agreement for affiliated-site costs be negotiated separately from the statutorily required cost-sharing agreement covering comprehensive one-stop centers.

WIOA sec. 121(h) mandates that the State, through the designated authority of the Governor, provide guidance to assist local WDBs, CEOs, and one-stop partners to determine equitable and stable methods to fund one-stop center infrastructure costs. The cost-allocation methodology must be in accord with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR Parts 200 and 2900.

WIOA and its implementing regulations also require that the State's guidance include timelines for Local WDBs to notify the State if local infrastructure cost allocation negotiations reach an impasse. If the Local WDB and the required partners are unable to conclude *and sign* a local infrastructure cost-sharing agreement for the ensuing Program Year before the State's deadline, WIOA gives the State no recourse but to impose an alternative State infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism. This is *not* an alternative to the local funding agreement. It is a statutory *consequence* triggered by an inability of the concerned parties in the LWDA to self-determine a funding plan.

3. State Guidelines: In compliance with WIOA sec. 121(h)(1)(B)(ii) and the implementing rules at 20 CFR 678.700-678.55, as well as US Department of Labor Guidance letters, e.g. Training and Employment Guidance Letter 17-16, OWC herewith issues Attachment 1 to this issuance containing the "Connecticut WIOA Infrastructure Cost Sharing Guidelines." Local MOU signatories are not bound to follow these recommendations; they may, in fact, adopt any local cost-allocation mechanism that is in accord with the Uniform Guidelines in 20 CFR Parts 200 and 2900. Nevertheless, we strongly encourage local WDBs, CEOs, and one-stop partners to develop their local infrastructure-cost allocation agreements using these guidelines.

Appeals Process

Upon receipt of the specific terms of a State infrastructure cost-allocation mechanism, any local WDB or one-stop required partner may appeal for cause, within 21 calendar days, in writing (electronic or hardcopy) the State's determination regarding the portion of funds (or non-cash contributions) the Local WDB or required partner is to provide. To be officially received, an appeal must fully contain evidence of the following:

1. An introduction identifying the appellant and designating the letter as a formal appeal;
2. Full citations from WIOA or the WIOA Final Rules in Title 29 or Title 34 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* that support the appeal.
3. *Identify the basis for the appeal.* WIOA stipulates that a State mechanism allocation determination may be appealed *only* if the determination is inconsistent with the requirements of WIOA sec. 121(h)(2)(E). The Final Rule at 20 CFR 678.750 further limits admissible grounds for an appeal to *three possibilities*. The petitioner must make a case that the State's determination is inconsistent with:

- the proportionate-share requirements in 20 CFR 678.737, or
- the cost-contribution limitations in 20 CFR 678.730(c), or
- the cost-contribution caps in 20 CFR 678.738
- The letter must be signed (electronic signature is acceptable) and dated.

Appeals must be submitted to OWC in one of the following manners: ☐ e-mail to Kathleen Marioni, Executive Director of OWC, at Kathleen.marioni@ct.gov; or fax to the CT DOL, Attention Kathleen Marioni, at (860)263 -6526; or mail to CT DOL, OWC, Attention Kathleen Marioni, 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT 06109.

The State will acknowledge the appeal and return a determination from OWC under the designated authority of the Governor as quickly as feasible. Until the appeals process is completed, the appellant will remain liable for its contribution as originally determined in the State funding mechanism. If a one-stop partner's appeal to the State using the process described in 20 CFR 678.750 is successful and results in a change to the one-stop partner's infrastructure-cost contributions, then the WDB/partner MOU *must* be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure- cost contributions.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

Both the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) and the WIOA Administration Unit issue state policies on workforce development and statewide workforce development through Administrative Policy memos. They can be accessed via the CTDOL WIOA Policy Manual at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/WIOAPolicyManual.pdf>.

Governor's Set Aside Funding: USDOL Training and Employment Guidance Letters issue allocations for WIOA funding each year including the percentages and mandatory activities

under the Governor's Reserve. The current set-aside is 15% of Connecticut's funding, while for Rapid Response activities, it is 25% of the total allocation. The CTDOL uses these funds to support Central Office staff that administer, manage and oversee the program, contracts, performance management and finances for Connecticut's WIOA program. On a statewide basis other uses of these funds have included support of One-Stop Center operations, technical assistance to Workforce Development Boards and for staff capacity building which has included providing front line staff with the Certified Employment Interviewer Professional certification. Once the PY allocations are determined, the Governor's Workforce Council approves the plan. If funding allows, CTDOL also provides flexible grants to the Workforce Development Boards to conduct experimental pilot programs that meet the regional needs of employers and the workforce. For example, such funds have been used to provide additional services to ex-offenders; for transportation subsidies; and Emergency NEG-like services.

Rapid Response: For companies and their workers, the effects of a plant closing or layoff can be devastating. In Connecticut, neither companies nor workers and their unions are alone in facing these changes. Connecticut's Rapid Response Team, headed by the State Department of Labor (CTDOL), exists to ease the impact of layoffs and to assure that workers are offered a full range of benefits and services. The Team is made up of representatives from the CTDOL and the local Workforce Development Boards. Support is also available from the Department of Economic & Community Development and the Department of Social Services.

The Rapid Response Team is available to conduct, prior to layoffs, "Early Intervention" sessions where employees can learn about unemployment benefits, job search assistance, and training opportunities. Information is also made available on health insurance options, community services, and local agencies that provide help, advocacy, and support to dislocated workers and their families. All services provided by the team are free.

Layoff Aversion: the state of Connecticut has established the Shared Work program to enable employers to keep skilled employees working during slow-downs. In these instances, CTDOL pays partial unemployment benefits for reduced hours. This limits the impact of layoffs on employer unemployment taxes. Employee hours and wages cannot be reduced by less than 10 percent or more than 60 percent. Rapid Response staff market the Shared Work program to employers who are contemplating layoffs or who have laid off. Rapid Response staff reaches out to participating Shared Work employers to check on their status and make appropriate referrals to Economic Development or other resources if the employers indicated that they were continuing to struggle or have difficulty emerging from a downturn in business.

In cases involving natural disasters, rapid response activities are coordinated with CT's Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the local Workforce Development Boards and other state and community agencies.

In CT response to natural disasters has been led by DESPP - through its Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) - and CTDOL is engaged through that lead - this includes the Rapid Response Unit. Additionally, CT's provision of Rapid Response as it relates to natural disasters is the same as the described in policy found in the WIOA policy manual and includes the coordinating efforts of DESPP with FEMA.

In Connecticut, most TAA petitions generated by State Workforce staff are filed by Rapid Response Unit staff members. In such cases, Rapid Response staffers have contacted the company regarding all reemployment and supportive services, including TAA. In most cases, Rapid Response staff members provide Early Intervention services at the employment site prior to layoff. Early intervention services include an overview of unemployment, job search assistance, health insurance options and possible training and employment services through both WIOA and TAA. If worker orientations are provided prior to a TAA certification, workers are given an overview of the possible benefits that may become available should the company and/or unit of the company become certified. Workers are advised as to how workers would be notified of their eligibility under TAA if the company becomes TAA certified.

In cases where an employer does not allow Rapid Response on-site to provide information on reemployment and possible TAA services prior to layoff, or where a TAA petition has been filed without prior Rapid Response knowledge, Rapid Response staff contact the employer officials listed on the TAA petition to explain Rapid Response services and to request a list of potential TAA-impacted workers' names and addresses. Provided that the employer supplies such a list, Rapid Response staff members send a TAA-outreach letter to potentially impacted workers. In cases where the employer does not respond to this request for worker information, Rapid Response staff will query the Unemployment system to try and identify potentially impacted workers and subsequently send TAA-outreach letters to those individuals. The outreach letter advises the individual that a TAA petition has been filed, provides the US DOL TAA website where additional information on the program can be found, and describes the re-employment services that are available through our American Job Centers. Additionally, the outreach letter provides workers who would like to hear additional information to participate in a webinar on available resources. Rapid Response staff members conduct weekly webinars on available transition services, and a description of the TAA program is discussed during the presentation. Information about TAA is available on CT DOL's website, is disseminated by Rapid Response Teams and a detailed fact sheet on TAA benefits and terms for workers is available at: www.ctdol.state.ct.us/TradeAct/.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

Training grants are available to help companies grow and maintain competitiveness by investing in training of their existing workforce. CT DOL Business Services Consultants work directly with companies to design, develop, and provide funding for projects and can help businesses locate appropriate training providers. Incumbent Worker Training grants are structured to be flexible to meet the business's training objectives. Customized training is also available as administered by the Workforce Development Boards.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

The state's workforce system challenge is to identify effective workforce solutions and collaborative approaches that benefit both job seeker and employer customers. The Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training works collaboratively with business and industry, economic development, education, training providers, and other partners on talent development strategies and workforce solutions to provide workers with the skills businesses need. Registered apprenticeship is a workforce solution that contributes to the development of industry-defined competencies needed by employers in the state, and serves as a proven industry-driven workforce education and preparation strategy for workers.

The Office of Apprenticeship Training invested in an aggressive training and outreach initiative to integrate registered apprenticeship into the career guidance and career exploration services offered through the American Job Center system, both virtually and as part of staff-assisted services. The Office of Apprenticeship Training provides apprenticeship awareness workshops to a multitude of staff and customers of the *American Job Centers*. This is an effort to ensure that apprenticeship is included as part of the full complement of education and training services the workforce system provides to its job seeker and employer customers. Department of Labor Business Services Consultants and American Job Center partners promote the integration of apprenticeship into business engagement strategies by encouraging the development of apprenticeship programs as a solution to meet business customer needs.

While most registered apprenticeship programs are funded by program sponsors, the Office of Apprenticeship Training workforce system is strategically leveraging state and federal funds to offset training costs for employers and to develop and advance worker pipelines for both emerging and established employers and regional industry sectors. CTDOL's comprehensive approach to the management of their Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL), Registered Apprenticeship (RA) sponsors and Related Technical Instructors (RTI) may request to have their programs listed on the ETPL, which is publicly viewable via the CTDOL website. In addition to providing another avenue for RA sponsors and RTIs to connect with potential apprentices, this opportunity under WIOA gives those eligible for apprenticeship access to

WIOA funding to support some or all of their related instruction, OJT and supportive services. Apprenticeship listings may remain on the ETPL as long as the sponsor remains registered.

Additional examples include, but are not limited to, the *Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative*, the Office of Apprenticeship Training and the *Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board* (EWIB) working together to implement registered apprenticeship as a pipeline for customized training programs in manufacturing at *General Dynamics/Electric Boat* and members of the *Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA)*.

The *American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI)* enables the Office of Apprenticeship Training to expand apprenticeship programs in new and growing industries as diverse as healthcare, Information Technology, and advanced manufacturing. While similar in purpose, the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF), which is a partnership with the state's Department of Economic and Community Development to support manufacturing companies in their efforts to implement real time, demand-driven registered apprenticeships.

The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Apprenticeship Program, allocated \$7.8 million when it was launched in 2015 has grown to a \$10.8 million state bond allocation, administered by CTDOL/OAT. This program continues to provide financial assistance in the form of a wage subsidy to manufacturers and tuition reimbursement (for MIF registered apprentices and pre-apprentices) to approved Apprentice Related Instruction Training Providers. To date over 700 apprentices and over 200 companies have received support through this program. CTDOL/OAT anticipates significant additional apprenticeship growth in this sector over the next ten years.

The strategic partnerships in Connecticut's workforce system ensure a clearer path for participants to succeed with the job-driven opportunities that registered apprenticeship programs offer. Apprenticeship provides a flexible training delivery option and when used in the context of economic development strategies, creates a seamless pipeline of skilled workers and flexible career pathways to meet current and future workforce demands.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Entities interested in applying for initial WIOA ETPL eligibility must submit a completed "Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Application," available on CTDOL's website at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/wioa-trngproviderapps.htm>, to the workforce development board (WDB) for the area in which the applying entity's headquarters (or, as applicable, main campus) is located (this WDB is then the "lead" board for the entity). In addition to applying to the lead board, the entity must submit a full copy of their ETPL initial eligibility application to each WDB in which any of the applying entity's training sites for program offerings are located. Secondary boards review the application and advise the lead board as to whether the application is approved or not for that area. Once the lead board and all applicable secondary boards have reached a decision to approve the application, the lead board advises CTDOL and requests a state level review (such reviews are on a rolling basis). CTDOL then conduct a review of the entity's status with OSHA, UI Tax, and Wage and Workplace Standards. If approved, CTDOL will inform the lead board which will then add the provider and program(s) to the ETPL (CTHires). If an OSHA, UI Tax or Wage matter prevents CTDOL from issuing approval, the entity will have the opportunity to resolve the issue(s).

Following one year of initial eligibility, ETPL providers must submit an application to be considered for continued eligibility. Prior to the expiration date of a provider's initial eligibility, the lead WDB will notify the provider that it may apply for continued eligibility. The lead WDB will also prepare a list of the provider's expiring programs so the provider may include them in the "CTDOL WIOA ETP Continued Eligibility Application" that the provider must submit to the lead WDB (and any secondary boards). The continued eligibility review process, both locally and by CTDOL, follows the same steps as described above for initial eligibility. Upon approval of continued eligibility by CTDOL, the lead board will update CTHires to indicate continued eligibility has been approved and will enter the new, two-year expiration date in CTHires. Additional ETPL procedures and ETPL policy are detailed in CTDOL's WIOA Policy Manual at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/WIOAPolicyManual.pdf>.

CT's policy manual has been updated to reflect assessing continued eligibility which includes a process to allow for providers to offer information related to any undue burden in reporting performance information.

An application-type document is used to gather info from sponsors who want to be listed on the ETPL in order for system-required and other basic fields to be completed in the system regarding the apprenticeship and boards must verify the state's determination as to the sponsors by checking the CTDOL Apprenticeship site for the sponsorslist.

The following is contained within the WIOA Policy Manual:

Apprenticeship and the ETPL

Pursuant to section 122(a)(3) of the WIOA, apprenticeship programs registered with the Connecticut Department of Labor, Apprenticeship Division are automatically eligible to be included on the ETPL.

Although registered apprenticeship programs are automatically eligible, the program will not be included on the ETPL unless the program provider notifies the Apprenticeship Division of its intention to be included on the ETPL.

The Apprenticeship Division will notify every apprenticeship program, registered as of the date of enactment of these procedures, to determine whether the program provider wants to be included on the ETPL.

New apprenticeship programs that want to be included on the ETPL shall indicate this intention on the provider section of the CTHires application.

If the program is already approved as a sponsor or related instruction provider through the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training the program will be added to the ETPL list in CTHires by the local Workforce Development Board in the region where the program/sponsor is located.

If the program is not an approved sponsor or related instruction provider they must first contact the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training to seek approval.

Once an apprenticeship program is registered on the ETPL, the program will remain on the ETPL until the program is no longer registered with the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training or until the provider notifies the Apprenticeship Division, in writing, of the intention to be removed from the list.

Registered apprenticeship programs are not required to submit initial or continued eligibility applications under these procedures. Registered apprenticeship programs are required to comply with all laws and rules regarding apprenticeship programs and labor laws in the State of Connecticut.

Per 20 CFR 680.480(b) all approved sponsors and related instructions providers will be notified in writing or electronically bi-annually to reaffirm their request to remain on the ETPL list.

Note: Registered apprenticeship programs, which are not required to apply for the WIOA ETPL, are subject only to certain reporting requirements as set forth in TEGl 41-14, applicable regulation, or other guidance

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM

All related WIOA policy memos including those specific to serving priority populations have been combined into a unified policy manual which is continuously updated for accuracy and content. The updated manual can be found at:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/WIOAPolicyManual.pdf>.

Several methods are used to comprehensively implement and monitor priority of service to priority populations including public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient. These methods include program compliance monitoring, case file review and electronic case management systems. CT DOL uses the CT HIRES automated case management system which includes a database with fields to identify

individuals who may be designated basic skills deficient, a recipient of public assistance, or to meet the definition of low income.

CTDOL, along with its workforce partners, continues to pursue the most effective and efficient use of its data capturing capabilities in order to determine the characteristics of the individuals being served through the workforce development system. The goal of these efforts is to better identify those individuals from priority populations who are seeking assistance in order to coordinate the most appropriate mix of programs and services through both required and non-required partner program agencies and organizations.

In Connecticut, the Department of Social Services determines which TFA recipients are mandated to participate in employment services. Those clients that are determined mandatory are referred to the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) in partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the 5 Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). When clients are first referred to the JFES program, they are assessed by their case managers to determine whether they are basic skills deficient or not. For many years, the assessment tool used to determine their reading and math levels was the CASAS. The CTDOL JFES and WIOA units have been collaborating on a new policy that will change the way that JFES clients are assessed. That policy has been developed in partnership with all 5 WDBs, along with the management teams of the CTDOL JFES and WIOA units. While the framework of the new policy is well developed, it has not been made public as of yet, as some fine tuning of the language is still required.

Approximately 90% of our JFES clients are basic skills deficient in either math or reading. Our JFES case managers are encouraged to co-enroll JFES participants into WIOA whenever they think it would benefit the participant. The receipt of Temporary Family Assistance automatically makes a participant eligible for WIOA as a low-income adult. In some regions, like the Eastern region, almost all of the JFES participants who attend vocational training in a given year do so using WIOA funds. JFES program funding is also available to provide case management services, job search assistance, employment readiness workshops, vocational training, Subsidized Employment opportunities, community service opportunities and other special benefits including child care subsidies through the Care4Kids program, where JFES participants are given priority for application review and childcare access, and transportation assistance including bus passes, mileage reimbursement and the use of Uber and Lyft ride sharing services to assist clients who don't have easy access to public transportation. As funding for the JFES program has been reduced by 31% over the past 4 years, we have found more and more value in leveraging the resources of both programs.

In addition, the CTDOL JFES and WIOA units work closely in conducting financial monitoring of the 5 WDBs for both programs. The CTDOL JFES Unit scrutinizes JFES contracts for any financial concerns related to the JFES contracts which are then passed along to the WIOA staff who conduct on-site financial monitoring at the WDB locations. This enables the JFES and WIOA programs to compare notes and ensure that expenditures are properly accounted for across the two programs.

The JFES and WIOA units have also collaborated on some training initiatives for staff in both programs.

We conducted a 3 day Business Engagement Training for all JFES and WIOA case managers around the state in the Fall of 2018.

In July 2019, the CTDOL JFES and WIOA units implemented a joint plan to have every JFES and WIOA case manager in the state of Connecticut achieve the Certified Employment Interview Professional Certification (CEIP) credential. This nationally recognized credential gives every single JFES and WIOA case manager the knowledge to provide high quality guidance to job seekers on all aspects of the art of job interviewing. This plan involved training all of these case managers in 4 separate cohorts. Each cohort began with a "Kick-off" event at the DOL Central Office which reviewed the entire process with the participating staff and set expectations for the

group. Representatives from PARW flew from Florida to Connecticut in order to observe the “Kick-off” event process for themselves.

This is the first mass certification process in the country for this credential and the Professional Association of Resume Writers viewed these “Kick - off” events as a best practice that could be replicated around the country.

CT will update its policy manual to reflect the specific method of monitoring to ensure the priority for public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals etc. which will include – authorizing local WDBs to develop their own priority of service delivery to targeted populations. CTDOL plans to establish target goals for service delivery to priority populations and through program monitoring will assess each local WDBs progress in meeting those goals.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE’S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Under WIOA 100% of funds for a fiscal year may be transferred between adult employment and training activities and dislocated worker employment and training activities, if approved by the Governor. Connecticut’s policy and criteria for transferring funds can be found in the current WIOA manual at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/WIOAPolicyManual.pdf>.

C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

Out of School Youth ages 16 to 24 and In School Youth 14-21 that meet specific eligibility requirements, may qualify for the following Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services.

- - Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion,
 - including
 - dropout prevention strategies;
 - Alternative secondary school offerings;
 - Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a
 - component of the work experience:
 - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available
 - throughout the school year;
 - Pre-apprenticeship programs;
 - Internships as defined in § 680.170 of the regulations and job shadowing; and
 - On-the-job training opportunities;
- Occupational skill training with priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations;

- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors; Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring for the duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation;
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth;
- Financial literacy education; Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area*, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training.

CT DOL has issued a policy which incorporates US DOL's guidance regarding administrative procurement procedures and the extent to which providers of youth services, such as the program design framework component, the ten program elements, and youth services delivered in a One-Stop setting, must be selected. The State of Connecticut adopted all such guidance and directed each area comply with these policies.

The five workforce development boards understand *Job Corps* to be a viable option and include it on the roster of service providers to whom they refer young people. In addition, nearby American Job Centers provide workshops for *Job Corps* student employees, introducing them to a variety of job search resources and other services. In addition, state monitoring, file review and data validation evaluate local area youth policy comprehensively. Following program monitoring, best practices and areas for corrective action are identified. CT DOL will also offer technical assistance to the WDBs to assist them in meeting youth performance measures.

Related youth policies can be found in the CTDOL WIOA Policy Manual.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Connecticut proposes to develop and emphasize career pathways by emphasizing the connection to career ladders as part of an Out of School Youth's individual service strategy -- an educational path along with occupational training for high-demand jobs, as defined by LMI and the LWDB.

For Out of School Youth, the removal of barriers that prevent successful transition to career pathways will be key to successful engagement. CTDOL will encourage the WDB's to pay special attention to identifying and engaging individuals who experience the following barriers:

English language learners (working closely with Adult ED/ESL partners and contextualized learning opportunities including IBEST models)

- Youth involved with the justice system (working closely with Court Support Services Division and community partners to support reduced recidivism and improved outcomes for such youth)
- Homeless, pregnant or parenting or youth (linking youth with housing and child care as available in the community, to stabilize pathways to self-sufficiency)
- Youth with disabilities (working closely with Vocational Rehabilitation partners to serve these youth in more seamless ways)

In the fall of 2017 CTDOL conducted a Youth Summit to explore ways of outreaching disconnected youth with barriers. Attendance included a wide range of state agencies, local

workforce development boards and their providers, private non-profit agencies, philanthropic organizations and youth.

Presentations regarding each of the WIOA identified barriers were explored and a blueprint for moving forward was developed. CTDOL will continue to support and engage the WDB's in developing programs which seek to remove the barriers which preclude Youth from successful participation in training programs and impair the ability for youth to reach the goals necessary for job-readiness. In August of 2019 CTDOL sponsored a Youth Mental Health First Aide Training Program geared at providing partner staff and their youth providers with the tools necessary to identify and engage individuals who present with mental health issues.

Performance Indicators for OSY effective July, 2019:

1. Placement in Employment/Education 2nd Qtr. after exit
2. Placement in Employment/Education 4th Qtr. after exit
3. Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit
4. Credential Attainment (up to 1 year after exit)
5. *Measurable Skills Gains*
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Connecticut seeks to define measurable skill gains in terms of gains on standardized tests for reading, math and ELL assessments; completing part or all of a GED course; earning GED credential; completion of one or more developmental education courses, passing a credit bearing; completing a designated number of higher education credits; objective demonstration of competencies related to work-based training. Again these indicators will be designed to emphasize career pathways.

A high-quality, comprehensive career pathway system will be developed and implemented that includes multiple entry and exit points that meets learners where they are, provides education, training and support services needed for career advancement, and ensures a skilled workforce that meets Connecticut's talent needs.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]

CT DOL ensures that youth services for both out of school and in-school youth are effectively implemented through contract management and oversight, administrative policy, data validation and monitoring and technical assistance, Youth related policies contained in CTDOL's WIOA policy manual prioritize out of school youth, drop out recovery and post-secondary credentials. Yearly monitoring includes a complete review of local youth services and providers to ensure federal law, policy and regulations are implemented. Monitoring includes interviews with staff and participants to ensure quality youth programming is provided.

CTDOL WIOA works closely with the CTDOL Office of Apprenticeship Training (OAT) in regard to Registered Apprenticeship programming including ensuring the offering of pre-apprenticeship programs to youth. Since 2016, CTDOL OAT has partnered with all 5 WDBs to create and certify a number of traditional and non-traditional pre-apprenticeship programs.

Over recent decades a heavy focus on post-secondary education has disheartened people on their journey to the labor force with the myth that they could not become successful without a college degree or needed to forfeit pursuing professional credentialing to get one. This left employers with a shortage of skilled workers and jobseekers with degrees & skillsets misaligned with the jobs they desired, along with crippling student loan debt. In response CTDOL/OAT, has formalized the Apprenticeship/Education pathway to move individuals from multiple entry points through their educational and apprenticeships programs and culminating in a credentialed, stable career and a degree, if desired.

Pre-Apprenticeship

In addition to Registered Apprenticeship programs, quality pre-apprenticeship programs are an integral piece of the pathway for many people young and old alike. Pre-apprenticeship offers a starting point toward a successful career path and a model for employers and students that otherwise may not be aware of this approach.

A student may earn additional on-the-job credits toward a registered apprenticeship if employed, on a part time basis, after school or as part of a Work Based Learning release program that may be established by the school and an apprenticeship employer sponsor that is approved by CTDOL/OAT.

Pre-apprentices can carry up to 2,000 hours of on-the-job experience into their registered apprenticeship program upon graduation similar to how an Advanced Placement (AP) program is designed and recognized.

There are increasing amounts of careers that do not require a college degree yet require a certificate or credential inclusive or exclusive of post-secondary education. Career Technical Education (CTE), enhanced in high schools with industry recognized credentials, has recently been utilized as a workforce development pipeline.

CTDOL/OAT has partnered with the State Department of Education (SDE), to begin statewide strategic planning for CTE Perkins V programming implementation. Various plans will encompass policy considerations and creation of Industry Councils at the local school district level for CTE credentialing, career exploration, career pathway development, business and industry led curricula alignment, Work Based Learning (WBL) partnerships and articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions for college credits. Through this partnership, CTDOL/OAT has expanded CTE under Perkins V, thus increasing Perkins V Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities. These include work-based learning and the development of industry recognized credentials. OAT has partnered with nearly 30 high schools & community colleges in CT to credential their CTE courses and link them to the pre-apprenticeship program array. Students enrolled at those schools now have the ability to enhance their theoretical knowledge with hands-on skill development. Additionally, through relationships built at these schools, OAT has been able to present the benefit of these credentials to school boards and encourage stable funding for Career Technical Education moving forward. Some new, exciting pre-apprenticeships include but not limited to:

- Goodwin College Insurance Pre-apprenticeship: creates a talent pipeline for insurance distributors in CT. Students obtain an Insurance Sales and Service Certificate, sit for licensing, and enter paid pre-apprenticeship. After completing the 150 hours of pre-apprenticeship, they move into their full-time job as an apprentice.
- Women Can Weld - The North Central Region Jobs Funnel Program partnered with the Ironworkers Local 15 Apprenticeship Training Program to conduct a pre-apprenticeship program targeted specifically for women participants to get an introduction into welding
- Future Bankers' Apprenticeship Program - pairs instruction to pre-apprentices at Crosby High School with on-the-job training in local banks
- Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) - focuses on high school students in addressing the hiring needs of Electric Boat, members of the East Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA), and other manufacturers.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN

WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

For youth who require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment, additional assistance may be defined to include youth who are/have:

- Emancipated
- Aged out of foster care
- Previous dropouts or have been suspended five or more times or have been expelled
- Court/agency referrals mandating school attendance
- At risk of dropping out of school by a school official
- Never held a job
- Been fired from a job within the twelve months prior to application (applies to out of school youth); and
- Never held a full-time job for more than thirteen consecutive weeks (applies to out of school youth).
- Migrant Youth
- Incarcerated Parent/Guardian
- Behavior Problems at School
- Serious emotional, medical or psychological problems
- Chronic Health Conditions including addictions
- Family Literacy Problems
- Domestic, Sexual Violence or other Trauma Survivor or reside in abusive environment
- One or more grade levels below appropriate for age
- Repeated at least one secondary grade level
- Core grade point average of less than 1.5
- For each year of secondary education, are at least two semester credits behind the rate required to graduate from high school
- Cultural barriers that may be a hindrance to employment
- American Indian, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian
- Refugee
- Homeless
- Eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch
- A foster child on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made
- Locally defined “additional assistance”

Under WIOA, local areas may define additional criterion for a youth who “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment” however under WIOA local areas may no longer define *local* barriers.

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL,” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

Connecticut’s policies on youth are complicated by discrepancies between the state education statutes and WIOA. Connecticut General Statutes, Sec. 10-184 says if a student has withdrawn from high school, he/she is considered an “out of school youth.”

“Not attending school” language has not been defined by our state Department of Education, which challenges our coordination with our adult education partner. What defines “out of school” is whether the youth/family has officially withdrawn in writing or not. Further, Connecticut youth must be 17 or older to withdraw and it requires parent or guardian’s

permission. (At the time of written withdrawal, parents/guardians/students MUST be apprised of adult education and other option for child).

SDE provides transition and supportive services for students with special needs up to age 21. At 18 a student doesn't need to officially withdraw in writing, but it is the policy of our Education Dept. to require 18 year olds to get a written withdrawal form. (This is because it forces the system to apprise the family that if they have an IEP and withdraw, they lose all entitlements to IEP services. 17 year olds can return to school, and reinstate IEP within 90 days. Those who withdraw from school in writing are only eligible for services under ADA, not other special education services. There are exceptions to this policy for certain students).

For purposes of Workforce Policy CT DOL has adopted the following definitions: "School" means an established institution of vocational, academic or technical instruction or education, other than a college or university. "Regularly enrolled student" means an individual who has completed all forms and processes required to attend a school, college or university and who will attend prescribed classes at the times they are offered.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

Basic Skills Deficiency per WIOA Policy As used in § 681.210(c)(3), a youth is "basic skills deficient" if he or she:

1. Has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or Are unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

An adult, who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. In using only National Reporting System approved Connecticut Competency System (CCS) test tools and based on the CASAS NRS Educational Functioning Level, CT has determined that a score of 236 and below on any test is considered to meet the criteria of basic skills deficiency.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

Connecticut is not a single-area state.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
members;	
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	71.5	71.5	71.5	71.5
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	69.5	69.5	69.5	69.5
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	4,900.0	5200.0	4900.0	5300.0
Credential Attainment Rate	70.5	70.5	70.5	70.5
Measurable Skill Gains	43.0	54.0	Baseline	54.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	76.5	76.5	76.5	78.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	77.0	77.0	77.0	77.0
Median Earnings (Second	7300.0	8600.0	7300.0	8800.0

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Quarter After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate	70.5	70.5	70.5	70.5
Measurable Skill Gains	31.0	31.0	Baseline	31.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	76.5	76.5	76.5	76.5
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	73.0	73.0	73.0	73.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	3200.0	Baseline	3,200.0
Credential Attainment Rate	72.5	72.5	72.5	72.5
Measurable Skill Gains	44.0	60.0	Baseline	60.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

The state will continue to utilize state merit staff employees.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

As funding allows, the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) will continue to promote the professional development of its staff, leveraging state, agency, and, as applicable, federal grant funds to enhance the skills of its workforce. CTDOL will continue to pursue professional résumé writer certification for all appropriate American Job Center staff utilizing agency staff for training and test preparation. Associate Community Service Representatives on the career path to Career Development Specialist will be afforded the opportunity to obtain the credentials required for promotion to this classification. Employment Service Staff, including Business Services staff, will continue to have the opportunity to attend annual workforce development events such as the Interagency Business Engagement Training and Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities. To build capacity, CTDOL will train American Job Center staff to facilitate a variety of standardized employment readiness workshops. In addition, in-service training courses offered each fall and spring by the Department of Administrative Services may

be made available to Employment Service staff to enhance computer, communication, writing, public speaking, presentation and supervisory skills.

The responsibilities of Employment Services staff in the American Job Centers include: assessing customer needs, addressing potential barriers to employment, assisting customers in the development of a work search plan, conducting employment workshops, one-on-one résumé critiques and career counseling and providing appropriate referral to employment services to facilitate a customer's return to work. These tasks require staff to have well developed presentation skills for the delivery of workshops, written communications skills to document case management activities and advanced resume writing skills to deliver high quality resume critiques. Employment Services staff serving the employer community must assess training needs, analyze labor market information, identify desired skills and abilities and address the recruitment needs of employers. They must possess knowledge of, the Connecticut Department of Labor's (CTDOL) programs and services for employers, as well as those offered by other agencies and organizations in order to seamlessly cross market to employers all available options throughout the entire workforce system.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

The agency will continue to provide training consistent with Connecticut's coordinated workforce system efforts to ensure all staff is aware of programs and services available throughout the workforce system and AJC customers are properly referred to appropriate programs and services. AJCs will continue the practice of holding regional partner meetings where information is shared regarding the core programs. AJCs will also continue to host a separate regional meeting specifically for front line Business Services Specialists representing all core WIOA partners. This fosters a coordinated service delivery approach to serving employers and gives staff an opportunity to share information regarding new programs and initiatives in their region.

The UI Training Coordinator as well as staff in CTDOL's Legal Unit have provided UI training to AJC staff and will continue to serve as a resource on UI matters. In the event a UI eligibility issue is detected, AJC staff will refer claimants to the UI expert in the AJC or Adjudications Unit using the UC-129 Route Slip to document the potential issue and provide adjudications staff with a mechanism for communicating the results of the referral back to Employment Services staff. The Employment Services Operations Unit routinely collaborates with the UI Division on matters relating to the RESEA program. ES and UI staff work jointly to develop CTDOL's RESEA Grant proposal, RESEA procedural memos and training for new AJC staff, as well as refresher training for existing staff. ES Operations staff and UI Adjudications staff work in teams to conduct formal onsite RESEA monitoring reviews and desk audits. The results of both RESEA and Wagner-Peyser monitoring reviews are shared with AJC staff and are used to provide technical assistance and additional formal training in groups or individually to address any deficiencies or areas of concerns.

In addition, all new hires in the AJC's receive 2-3 weeks of UI training conducted by our Agency's designated trainer. Specifically, staff are trained in the unemployment claims taking process. This includes the following: learning the initial application; issue identification that leads to the Adjudications process; reviewing a claimant's benefit payment history and releasing payments when appropriate. It should also be noted that our UI Division has also been conducting high level IBM (mainframe) training to veteran WIOA staff. This training will give our WIOA employees more UI knowledge when answering basic phone calls and inquiries from our customers. The UI Division will continue to cross train AJC and WIOA staff in the future with the goal of expediting a customer's UI question and reducing handoffs.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

Unemployment Insurance (UI) experts are available at the affiliate and comprehensive American Job Centers to assist customers with unemployment-related inquiries. This assistance may include processing continued claims; releasing payments when appropriate; processing address changes; assisting claimants with filing appeals; providing identity verifications, printouts or status letters; and supplying information on the Shared Work program and Rapid Response services. The UI experts will also provide handouts or desk aids to customers with questions that can be answered via the web (www.filectui.com) and inform claimants of other services provided by the American Job Centers. These UI experts can also grant requests for a reasonable accommodation by taking claims for claimants with disabilities who cannot file via the internet or by telephone. UI experts in the American Job Centers will also have access to Language Line services to accommodate customers with limited English proficiency.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA):

CTDOL meets the reemployment needs of many UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program, which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX). Selected claimants report for services in the Bridgeport, Hamden, Hartford, Montville and Waterbury American Job Centers. CTDOL's RESEA program design includes an increased UI presence in the AJCs and the extensive involvement of UI staff in the development, implementation and monitoring of the program. Ongoing staff training includes roundtable technical assistance sessions and formal classroom training and focuses on enhancing the skills needed to assist claimants with their reemployment efforts.

RESEA program representatives have been trained to effectively access labor market information specific to a claimant's job skills and employment prospects, develop a reemployment plan to meet the claimant's needs and determine appropriate referrals to reemployment services or training. CTDOL expects to complete at least 8,515 initial RESEAs during the 12-month period ending December 31, 2019.

Required RESEA Services. Each RESEA must include the following core components to serve the needs of the claimant.

- UI eligibility assessment, including review of work search activities, and referral to adjudication, as appropriate, if an issue or potential issue(s) is identified;
- The provision of labor market and career information that addresses the claimant's specific needs;
- Enrollment in Wagner-Peyser Act funded Employment Services;
- Providing support to the claimant to develop and implement an individual reemployment plan; and
- Providing information and access to American Job Center (AJC) services and referrals to reemployment services and training, as appropriate, to support the claimant's return to work.

State use of W-P funds to support UI claimants, and other communication between W-P and UI, including:

- (1) Coordination and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;
- (2) Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment services;
- (3) Administration of the work test for State unemployment compensation system. Including eligibility assessments and job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and
- (4) Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

CTDOL emails a Claimant's Guide to Unemployment Benefits to all initial unemployment claim filers. A hard copy of this guide can be printed upon request. This guide contains all necessary information related to a person's eligibility for unemployment benefits as well as a listing of the American Job Centers throughout Connecticut and information about the employment services they provide to job seekers. As a result of filing for Unemployment Insurance, UI claimants are registered with the State's employment service in the form of a registration in CTHires, the state's web-based workforce development system that provides case management and labor exchange services and the state job bank. Claimants will receive a welcome email from CTHires after filing, which explains the services available and encourages them to utilize CTHires for their job search.

CTDOL administers the work test for UI claimants through the UIRESEA program. All claimants selected to participate will report to an American Job Center for a review of their UI eligibility and efforts to find work. Any claimant determined to have an eligibility issue or insufficient work search efforts will have a stop entered on his or her unemployment claim and the eligibility issue is referred to the UI expert in the AJC for review and potential referral to the Adjudications Unit. All claimants who attend the Initial RESEA appointment will receive a customized reemployment plan, jointly developed with the RESEA representative, and be required to participate in at least one additional mandatory employment service activity. Services include referrals to employment readiness workshops, résumé critiques, career counseling, WIOA orientation sessions, or any other service available in the American Job Center.

State agency merit-based staff will continue to provide Wagner-Peyser Act funded labor exchange activities. These services include job readiness workshops on topics such as Successful Job Search Strategies, Fundamentals of Résumé Writing and Interviewing Strategies and Techniques; one-on-one career counseling, résumé critiques; employer recruitments; job readiness assessments; and Career Center services. In the Career Centers located in the American Job Centers, job seekers will be able to work on their résumés and cover letters, complete online job applications, research companies, review job postings and conduct any other business related to their job search. They will have access to copy machines, fax machines, free postage for mailing résumés and applications to employers and most importantly, in-person support from CTDOL and Workforce Development Board contractor staff that provide whatever guidance and support might be needed. Career Center customers with disabilities will have access to accessible technology, such as large screen computer monitors and visual magnifiers, screen reader software, adjustable workstations, computer keyboards with visually enhanced lettering, sign language interpreters and any other reasonable accommodation the customer might need. All American Job Centers will have a process in place that allows staff to refer customers to education and training programs as well as other resources and supportive services. Some referrals will be made "in house" to other partner agencies under the roof of the American Job Center while others may be to organizations that are located in separate venues. Trade Act clients will be co-enrolled into WIOA as a standard operating procedure. CTDOL will continue to deploy a team of Business Services Specialists across Connecticut whose sole focus is working with employers. Business Services Specialists identify employers interested in scheduling recruitment events in the American Job Centers and coordinate those events around the state. Some offices strategically conduct multi-employer recruitments in the AJC on the same day as Initial RESEA appointments. This allows RESEA participants to connect in-person with hiring employers at the conclusion of their Initial RESEA appointment. Employers with scheduled recruitments are required to post their job listings in CTHires to make their employment opportunities available to all job seekers including UI claimants. Business Services Specialists also provide in-person business consultations to identify a company's needs, promote Work Opportunity Tax Credits, and provide customized labor market information, unemployment compensation information as well as information and referral to CTDOL's Apprenticeship program.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING: CTDOL emails a Claimant's Guide to Unemployment Benefits to all initial unemployment claim filers. A hard copy of this guide can be printed upon request. This guide contains all necessary information related to a person's eligibility for unemployment benefits as well as a listing of the American Job Centers throughout Connecticut and information about the employment services they provide to job seekers. As a result of filing for Unemployment Insurance, UI claimants are registered with the State's employment service in the form of a registration in CTHires, the state's web-based workforce development system that provides case management and labor exchange services and the state job bank. Claimants will receive a welcome email from CTHires after filing, which explains the services available and encourages them to utilize CTHires for their job search.

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State agency merit-based staff will continue to provide Wagner-Peyser Act funded labor exchange activities. These services include job readiness workshops on topics such as Successful Job Search Strategies, Fundamentals of Résumé Writing and Interviewing Strategies and Techniques; one-on-one career counseling, résumé critiques; employer recruitments; job readiness assessments; and Career Center services. In the Career Centers located in the American Job Centers, job seekers will be able to work on their résumés and cover letters, complete online job applications, research companies, review job postings and conduct any other business related to their job search. They will have access to copy machines, fax machines, free postage for mailing résumés and applications to employers and most importantly, in-person support from CTDOL and Workforce Development Board contractor staff that provide whatever guidance and support might be needed. Career Center customers with disabilities will have access to accessible technology, such as large screen computer monitors and visual magnifiers, computer keyboards with visually enhanced lettering, sign language interpreters and any other reasonable accommodation the customer might need. All American Job Centers will have a process in place that allows staff to refer customers to education and training programs as well as other resources and supportive services. Some referrals will be made "in house" to other partner agencies under the roof of the American Job Center while others may be to organizations that are located in separate venues. Trade Act clients will be co-enrolled into WIOA as a standard operating procedure. CTDOL will continue to deploy a team of Business Services Specialists across Connecticut whose sole focus is working with employers. Business Services Specialists identify employers interested in scheduling recruitment events in the American Job Centers and coordinate those events around the state. Some offices strategically conduct multi-employer recruitments in the AJC on the same day as Initial RESEA appointments. This allows RESEA participants to connect in-person with hiring employers at the conclusion of their Initial RESEA appointment. Employers with scheduled recruitments are required to post their job listings in CTHires to make their employment opportunities available to all job seekers including UI claimants. Business Services Specialists also provide in-person business consultations to identify a company's needs, promote Work Opportunity Tax Credits, and provide customized labor market information, unemployment compensation information as well as information and referral to CTDOL's Apprenticeship program.

CTDOL emails a Claimant's Guide to Unemployment Benefits to all initial unemployment claim filers. A hard copy of this guide can be printed upon request. This guide contains all necessary information related to a person's eligibility for unemployment benefits as well as a listing of the American Job Centers throughout Connecticut and information about the employment services they provide to job seekers. As a result of filing for Unemployment Insurance, UI claimants are registered with the State's employment service in the form of a registration in CTHires, the

state's web-based workforce development system that provides case management and labor exchange services and the state job bank. Claimants will receive a welcome email from CTHires after filing, which explains the services available and encourages them to utilize CTHires for their job search.

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E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE.

SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND

FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) continues to ensure that the employment and training services provided to the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) population are qualitatively equivalent, and quantitatively proportional, to the employment and training services provided to other jobseekers.

According to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) latest Census data (2012), Connecticut agriculture is a \$550 million revenue industry.¹ Approximately 6,000 farms are in operation, covering some 440,000 acres.¹ The farms are spread throughout the state, although the Connecticut River Valley, which runs all the way through the center of the state from beyond the Massachusetts border to the Long Island Sound, has long been known to provide fertile soil and a temperate climate. In its heyday, many of the highest quality cigars, regardless of the country of manufacture, sourced the most important component of the cigar, its wrapper, from tobacco farms that thrived in the Connecticut River Valley. Today's Connecticut tobacco industry has been affected by more than social factors though, as cigar wrappers of lower, but similar quality, are now available to the manufacturers at a much lower cost due to lower production expenses in Central America. Despite this shift in the tobacco industry and a steady decline in the number of farms between 2002 and 2012, there has been a 43 percent increase per USDA data, with one possible cause being an increased consumer appetite for locally sourced food, drawing some younger people to start up small farms.²

The aforementioned increase in number of farm operations in Connecticut does not necessarily equate to a proportionate increase in labor though. Connecticut Labor Market Information Occupational Projections for Farming, Fishing, and Forestry only estimates a 1.5% overall increase (from 4,006 jobs to 4,064 jobs) for the entire occupational group between 2014 and 2024, with a 1.7% increase (from 3,735 jobs to 3,800 jobs) when excluding Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers and Forest, Conservation, and Logging Workers.³ CTDOL's Foreign Labor Certification Unit, which deals with H-2A related temporary agricultural labor job orders, has seen a steady decrease of participating employers and number of workers requested over the last two decades. For PY 2016 only 33 agricultural employers participated in the H-2A program, placing a total of 60 job orders and requesting a total of 398 workers. No employer in the state utilizes the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) exclusively. In CTDOL's outreach experience, other employers that are large enough to hire farm laborers, but are not seeking the department's services, have utilized labor contractors, or word-of-mouth, to fill their labor needs. Most of the farm operations that CTDOL staff has encountered have expressed the increasing difficulty of finding local employees.

The term "local" can be misleading though, and it is imperative to note that, according to the US Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), "the share of hired crop farmworkers who were not legally authorized to work in the US grew from roughly 15 percent in 1989- 91 to almost 55 percent in 1999-2001. Since then it has fluctuated around 50 percent."⁴ The same survey indicates that "almost three-quarters of all hired crop farmworkers (nationally) are not migrants, but are considered settled, meaning they work at a single location within 75 miles of their home. This number is up from 42 percent in 1996-1998."⁴ Of the roughly 25 percent that are migrant, "the largest group are "shuttlers," who work at a single farm location more than 75 miles from home, and may cross an international border to get here. They made up about 12 percent of hired crop farmworkers in 2007- 2009, down from about 24 percent in 1996-1998."⁴ "The once more common migrant farm worker that moved from state to state working on different crops as the seasons advance, is now a relative rarity. These workers make up just five percent of those surveyed by NAWS in 2007-2009."⁴

3 <http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/projections2014.asp#farming>

4 <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/background.aspx>

This change in demographics and migration/settling patterns reflected by NAWS at a national level would partly explain the difficulty Connecticut agricultural employers are experiencing in finding employees. The current political climate and immigration policies are also factors that

could further impact the present and future labor supply in agriculture. For this reason we may see a future increase of foreign temporary labor through the H-2A program in Connecticut, as well as the rest of the nation.

The majority of Connecticut's local and migrant agricultural labor force has origins in Mexico, Central America, Jamaica, Haiti, and Puerto Rico. Employers that utilize the H-2A program request workers from Mexico, Central America, Jamaica, and South Africa. The predominant language is Spanish for the majority that originated or travel from Spanish speaking countries. (Although it cannot be assumed that someone from a "Spanish-speaking" country speaks Spanish due to the existence of other native languages in these countries) Agricultural workers contacted through CTDOL's outreach efforts continue to experience vulnerabilities and barriers due to language, literacy, education, immigration status, and access to healthcare. Those without legal status are even more susceptible to exploitation and retaliation.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) continues to ensure that the employment and training services provided to the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) population are qualitatively equivalent, and quantitatively proportional, to the employment and training services provided to other jobseekers. Pursuant to TEN 13-19, CTDOL is not currently seeking to utilize the Wagner-Peyser Act Staffing Flexibility final rule to its (PY) 2020-2023 WIOA State Plan in delivering these services to our MSFW and FLC customers. We will continue to utilize state merit staff employees to provide services to our MSFW and FLC customers. According to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) latest Census data (2012), Connecticut agriculture is a \$550 million revenue industry.¹ Approximately 6,000 farms are in operation, covering some 440,000 acres.¹ The farms are spread throughout the state, although the Connecticut River Valley, which runs all the way through the center of the state from beyond the Massachusetts border to the Long Island Sound, has long been known to provide fertile soil and a temperate climate. In its heyday, many of the highest quality cigars, regardless of the country of manufacture, sourced the most important component of the cigar, its wrapper, from tobacco farms that thrived in the Connecticut River Valley. Today's Connecticut tobacco industry has been affected by more than social factors though, as cigar wrappers of lower, but similar quality, are now available to the manufacturers at a much lower cost due to lower production expenses in Central America. Despite this shift in the tobacco industry and a steady decline in the number of farms between 2002 and 2012, there has been a 43 percent increase per USDA data, with one possible cause being an increased consumer appetite for locally sourced food, drawing some younger people to start up small farms.²

¹ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=connecticut
The following chart reflects the top five labor intensive crops in Connecticut with higher numbers of migrant and seasonal farm workers, based on values of sales

Crop / Commodity Groups	Period of Heavy Activity	Primary Region
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	February—August	Statewide
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	March—October	Statewide
Broadleaf and Shade Tobacco	May—October	Connecticut River Valley
Fruit, tree nuts, and berries	June—October	Statewide

Crop / Commodity Groups	Period of Heavy Activity	Primary Region
Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	April—December	Statewide

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

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4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

All outreach efforts to MSFWs were performed solely by the SMA up until May 5th 2017, when an outreach representative was hired to comply with the requirements set forth at 20 CFR 653.107. The Outreach Representative will carry out his responsibilities, throughout the state, in a full-time capacity during periods of the highest MSFW activity, between March and November, and in part-time capacity the remainder of the time. The Outreach Representative has a prior background in the MSFW program and has been brought up to speed on recent regulation changes.

Connecticut's SMA attends all required conferences and/or trainings, and strives to involve the outreach representative in as many activities as possible. Resource material, technical assistance, and best practices attained at these events are passed down to the outreach representative, as well as all AJC staff. Said staff is put through periodic MSFW Program and Job Service Complaint System training to refresh their MSFW and Job Service Complaint System knowledge.

The SMA and Outreach Representative will continue to coordinate outreach visits to farms with CTDOL's NFJP grantee, the New England Farm Workers' Council (NEFWC), the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program (CRVFHP) and UConn's Migrant Farm Worker Clinics, and the US DOL Wage and Hour Division.

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Connecticut's SMA and Outreach Representative have extensive knowledge and experience with Unemployment Insurance. Both have spent the early part of their career taking and processing claims as well as identifying and resolving issues for claimants in both English and Spanish. In addition, they are knowledgeable in job seeker services in our job centers, and are in contact with both WP and WIOA staff in each American Job Center Office across the state.

Connecticut's SMA attends all required conferences and/or trainings, and strives to involve the outreach representative in as many activities as possible. Resource material, technical assistance, and best practices attained at these events are passed down to the outreach representative, as well as all AJC staff. Said staff is put through periodic MSFW Program and Job Service Complaint System training to refresh their MSFW and Job Service Complaint System knowledge.

Connecticut Department of Labor offers professional development to all staff. Both our SMA and Outreach Representative have attended local, regional as well as national sessions to enhance skills to support both farmworkers and growers. They are both well versed in job seeker and employer rights and responsibilities as well as complaint system. Both the SMA and Outreach Representative work in labor exchange activities for MSFW and H2A populations.

The SMA and Outreach Representative will continue to coordinate outreach visits to farms with CTDOL's NFJP grantee, the New England Farm Workers' Council (NEFWC), the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program (CRVFHP) and UConn's Migrant Farm Worker Clinics, and the US DOL Wage and Hour Division.

Connecticut's SMA has established relationships with various entities across the state and region, including the NEFWC, CTDOL's NFJP grantee. A Memorandum of Understanding was updated between the two agencies in March of 2016, hoping to maximize the number of resources available to MSFWs. The SMA has also established collaboration between the NEFWC and the Hartford AJC, affording staff from both agencies to familiarize themselves with each other's services, and establishing points of contact in each agency to ease coordination of services and referrals between both offices. CTDOL intends to establish similar relationships between NEFWC and its other AJCs going forward.

The SMA has also established relationships with the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker

Health Program and UConn's Migrant Farmworker Clinics, area Community Health Centers, Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, and Massachusetts Migrant Educational Program. The SMA, along with the Outreach Representative, will look to maintain and/or expand these relationships over the foreseeable future. Both the SMA and the Outreach Representative are active in coordinating events and participating in joint meeting with various entities. Often, they hold joint sessions at farms. Expanded agreements are expected to be completed in the upcoming year.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Agricultural workers, job seekers, and employers have access to the same employment services available in each of Connecticut's American Job Centers (AJCs) that are available to non-agricultural workers, job seekers, and employers. The network consists of 5 comprehensive centers and an additional 13 partner staffed centers. (With partial SWA staffing) CTDOL outreach staff encourages workers and job seekers to visit the AJCs to take advantage of the below services:

- Computer labs with internet access, including access to CTDOL's newly implemented self-service operating system/database for job seekers, employers, and partner agencies—CTHires
- Reemployment workshops and services
- Career planning and counseling
- Access to labor market information
- Recruitment assistance
- Veteran employment and training services
- Adult, Dislocated, and Youth Worker activities under WIOA
- Adult Education under Connecticut State Department of Education
- Apprenticeship Training information
- Vocational Rehabilitation Training under DORS (Department of Rehabilitation Services) and BESB (Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind)
- Unemployment Insurance assistance
- Jobs First Employment Services
- Referrals to supportive services
- Complaint handling

Staff in the American Job Centers is put through periodic MSFW Program and Job Service Complaint System training to refresh their MSFW and Job Service Complaint System knowledge. The SMA will continue on-site monitoring of the AJCs to ensure compliance with the Job Service regulations, offering technical assistance as needed.

Outreach efforts often involve collaboration with partner agencies/advocacy groups, and serve to inform said agencies/groups, as well as the farm workers themselves, on the Job Service Complaint System.

Although employer services and the utilization of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) are typically promoted during outreach visits, CTDOL has begun involving and collaborating with its Business Services Representatives to better serve the needs of these agricultural employers. Other services available to agricultural employers include:

- Assistance with the placement of job orders
- Assistance with the recruitment of qualified workers
- Mediation and interpretation assistance
- Complaint assistance

- Technical assistance on compliance with employment related Federal and State regulations

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

The SMA has also established relationships with the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program and UConn's Migrant Farmworker Clinics, area Community Health Centers, Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, and Massachusetts Migrant Educational Program. The SMA, along with the Outreach Representative, will look to maintain and/or expand these relationships over the foreseeable future. Both the SMA and the Outreach Representative are active in coordinating events and participating in joint meeting with various entities. Often, they hold joint sessions at farms. Expanded agreements are expected to be completed in the upcoming year.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The WIOA Section 167 NFJP Grantee, the New England Farm Worker's Council, has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on CTDOL's Agricultural Outreach Plan. No comments or additional recommendations were received.

Connecticut's SMA has reviewed and approved CTDOL's Agricultural Outreach Plan.

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Analysis of Connecticut's performance data may show that certain indicators were not met at all times during this past four year period. However, CTDOL does not feel the data is commensurate with its efforts to meet the performance goals. Agricultural workers are continuously encouraged to seek better opportunities through employment and training programs at the AJCs, but certain factors, such as legal status, may be preventing part of the population from taking advantage of these services. This leaves us with a much smaller pool of measurable MSFWs, of which some may actually take advantage of the offered services, but not all, in which case the state ends up failing certain indicators. Some of the failed indicators can also be attributed to the transition period to a new database over the past two years, which affected some of the data. CTDOL will continue to provide the state's MSFWs with quantitatively proportionate, and qualitatively equivalent, services as compared to non-MSFWs. It will also continue to encourage agricultural workers to seek better opportunities through employment services and training.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

e. 6. D. Assessment of Progress	State Monitor Advocate Annual Summary of Services to Migrant and Seasonal
The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.	Farmworkers
	20 CFR 653.108(s)

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) must prepare for the State Administrator, the Regional Monitor Advocate, and the National Monitor Advocate, an Annual Summary describing how the State provided employment services to MSFWs within the State based on statistical data, reviews, and other activities as required in this chapter. The summary must include:

(1) A description of the activities undertaken during the program year by the SMA pertaining to his/her responsibilities set forth in this section and other applicable regulations in this chapter.

Review of the Previous Year's Agricultural Activity in the State

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In PY 2018, according to USDA/NASS data, there was an estimated 5,521 farms in Connecticut operating on 381,539 acres. CTDOL's Labor Market Information indicates that there were approximately 4,700 people employed in this industry. The number of employers submitting H-2A related job orders increased to 46 during this period, totaling 85 job orders and 820 workers requested. The rest of agricultural employers continue to recruit on their own.

Despite the difficulty of finding US workers for these jobs, CTDOL continued to promote its recruitment assistance services during outreach efforts. CTDOL's Foreign Labor Certification Specialist, along with the State Monitor Advocate (SMA) and Outreach Worker, also screened job seekers inquiring about the posted job orders, ensuring that qualified prospects, understood the terms and conditions of each job before being referred to a job opening.

Outreach

For PY 2018, outreach worker responsibilities were, carried out in a full-time capacity during periods of the highest MSFW activity in Connecticut, between March and November, and in part-time capacity the remainder of the time.

The SMA has continued to maintain and strengthen existing partnerships with various organizations, developing additional partnerships with other stakeholders whenever possible. These partnerships provide the MSFW SWA staff with the opportunity to share their knowledge of farm worker needs, characteristics and concerns, and to work to develop solutions to deficiencies in service delivery to MSFWs. During outreach visits, CTDOL staff continues to promote the integrated, and universally accessible, employment services that are offered to all customers, including MSFWs, in each of Connecticut's American Job Centers. (AJC)

MSFWs have access to the following services through a single delivery system: Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services such as Career Counseling, Veterans Employment and Training, Professional Resumé Critiquing/Resumé Writing, Job Search Assistance, Reemployment Workshops and Job Referrals. Other employment and training services include Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth under WIOA; Adult Education, Apprenticeship Training, Vocational Rehabilitation Training under Department of Aging and Disability Services; and BESB (Board of Education and Services for the Blind), Unemployment Insurance, Jobs First Employment Services, and Referral to Supportive Services. This universal access to core services guarantees barrier-free admission to all seekers of employment and training services, including individuals with disabilities. If an MSFW cannot, or does not wish, to visit an AJC to seek these services, assistance to access to these services will be provided by the outreach worker.

Staff encourages non-English-speaking customers to take advantage of the free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes offered through Adult Education or CTDOL's WIOA Section 167 Grantee, the New England Farm Worker's Council. (NEFWC) This is a critical component of promoting lifelong learning and developing the basic skills needed to secure employment and pursue career growth.

Affirmative Action Plans

Regulations require SMA participation in Affirmative Action Planning only as it relates to MSFWs.

Connecticut has no significant offices and therefore is not required to submit an MSFW Affirmative Action Plan. CTDOL's Affirmative Action Plan relates only to its own employees and their hiring.

Monitoring

In PY 2018 the SMA accompanied the RMA, as part of a consolidated compliance review, on formal onsite reviews of two (2) AJCs that are part of the Workforce Development Board (WDB) overseeing the eastern region of the state: Montville AJC, a comprehensive center, and Willimantic AJC, a satellite office that was once a comprehensive center and still offers many of the same services. Monitoring and field checks took place between 4/1/19 and 4/5/19.

Indicators of Compliance and Corrective Actions

In PY 2018 Equity Ratio Indicator data was reported as per Federal guidance (PIRL crosswalk) provided by the NMA and RMA. Over his tenure the SMA has observed that two of the Equity Ratio Indicators are uncontrollable by CTDOL or its staff. Referred to Jobs and Job Development Contacts depend heavily on the participant's willingness to seek other employment opportunities. The SMA has discussed the issue with the prior RMA.

Compliance with Minimum Service Level Indicators is only required from the twenty (20) most significant MSFW states, pursuant to 20 CFR 653.112 (c). Although Connecticut is not a significant state, the MSFW Unit continues to strive to improve CTDOL's performance in these areas.

(2) An assurance that the SMA has direct, personal access, whenever he/she finds it necessary, to the State Administrator and that the SMA has status and compensation approved by the civil service classification system, and is comparable to other State positions assigned similar levels of tasks, complexity, and responsibility.

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) position is a federally mandated position, required under 20 CFR §653.108. This individual monitors the agency for compliance with federal regulations concerning services and protections to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs). The individual also advocates on behalf of the MSFW population to improve services within CT DOL, and other government and non-government agencies. The SMA is also responsible for

investigating and processing MSFW complaints and the overall monitoring of the complaint system within CT DOL. When necessary, he acts as a mediator between employers and farmworkers; offers technical advice to agency officials, employers and other interested parties; and serves as an MSFW representative on boards and committees of community organizations. Yu-mon Luis Chang has been designated as the Connecticut SMA by the State Administrator. In this role, Luis has access as needed to the administrator within the CT Department of Labor.

(3) An assurance the SMA devotes all of his/her time to Monitor Advocate functions. Or, if the SWA proposed the SMA conducts his/her functions on a part-time basis, an explanation of how the SMA functions are effectively performed with part-time staffing.

In Connecticut, the State Monitor Advocate is a full time position to ensure SMA functions are effectively performed. The CT SMA is part of the Performance & Accountability unit within the CT DOL.

(4) A summary of the monitoring reviews conducted by the SMA, including:

a. A description of any problems, deficiencies, or improper practices the SMA identified in the delivery of services;

The SMA performed on-site reviews of two (2) AJCs, Montville and Willimantic.

b. A summary of the actions taken by the State Workforce Agency (SWA) to improve its service delivery to MSFWs:

MSFW Data Quality Issues:

CTDOL has revised its MSFW Desk Aid, including updated definitions of MSFW related terminology. The SMA has also trained a small group of recently appointed front-line staff on the MSFW Program, farmworker definitions, and procuring 12 month work history from participants to determine proper MSFW classification. Further training and refresher sessions to all existing AJC staff was completed by the spring of 2020. It included presentations from NEFWC.

Update of MSFW Program Policy and Procedures Guidelines:

CTDOL staff has met MSFW program requirements through the SMA's strict reliance on Federal regulations and guidance, reference material from previous

Connecticut SMAs, and the SMA's own network of colleagues and stakeholders. CTDOL SMA and MSFW Outreach Worker are currently finalizing the policy and procedure guidelines for housing inspections, MSFW outreach, SMA monitoring and field checks. Expected to be completed by the end of 2020..

Introduce AJC Staff to NFJP Services:

The SMA has been working on growing the relationship between Connecticut AJCs and the NEFWC, with the intent of improving the delivery and efficacy of employment and training services to CT's MSFWs, as well as increasing MSFW participation at job centers. The assessment by the federal staff does not mention any of the SMA's prior efforts or achievements in this area, such as (a) already having introduced NEFWC staff and services at the Hartford and Hamden AJCs, (b) already having established and tested a referral system between the Hartford AJC and NEFWC, with plans of utilizing the same model at other AJCs, and (c) already helping NEFWC with their enrollment goals through closely coordinated outreach activities and initiatives. The assessment makes no mention of socio/economic factors that were discussed in the meeting, which are affecting NEFWC's enrollment goals directly.

CTDOL has completed training sessions for all American Job Center staff. The training covered the definition of seasonal farmworker and migrant farmworker, recording the employment in CThires, accurately designating our customers as MSFW or non-MSFW in CThires, and a refresher of services and presentation by NEFWC.

(5) A summary of the outreach efforts undertaken by all significant and non-significant MSFW ES offices.

Connecticut is not a significant MSFW state, nor does it have any significant MSFW ES offices. Outreach efforts originate from CTDOL's Central Office, performed by the MSFW Outreach Worker and SMA. A summary of the outreach log for PY 2018: 124 employer visits. Services were provided to 987 farmworkers.

(6) A summary of the State's actions taken under the Complaint System described in part 658, Subpart E of this chapter, identifying any challenges, complaint trends, tracking resolution of complaints, findings from reviews of the Complaint System, trainings offered

	<p>throughout the year, and steps taken to inform and educate MSFWs, employers, and farmworker advocacy groups about the Complaint System.</p> <p>During PY 2018, CTDOL continued to promote the availability of the Job Service Complaint system to Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers. The SMA received copies of the Job Service Complaint and Apparent Violations logs from each local office at the conclusion of each calendar quarter. Although no formal MSFW complaints were filed during PY 2018, the SMA quickly acted upon and resolved informal complaints voiced by farm workers, providing additional information and guidance when needed.</p> <p>(7) A summary of how the SMA is working with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) sec. 167 NFJP grantees and other organizations serving farmworkers, employers and employer organizations, in the State, and an assurance that the SMA is meeting at least quarterly with representatives of these organizations. The summary should include whether the SMA has established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NFJP grantee or other farmworker organizations in accordance with 20 CFR 653.108 (l).</p> <p>Activities that took place in PY 2018 that promoted interagency cooperation included, but were not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued cooperation with NEFWC in an effort to coordinate both agencies' employment and training services, but also to avoid duplication of services. As previously mentioned, CTDOL has a statewide MOU with NEFWC, its NJFP grantee. • Presented information to students at the University of Connecticut in a class titled "Migrant Workers in Connecticut." SMA and Outreach Worker provided information on their own job duties as well as the variety of employment and support services available to MSFWs through CTDOL's programs. • Participated in the University of Connecticut's Migrant Farm Worker Clinic Symposium by presenting information about MSFWs to medical students who visit farms and conduct free medical screenings for farm workers. • Maintained existing relationships with
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	<p>community based organizations such as the University of Connecticut Health Center, Area Health Education Centers, and Statewide Legal Services of CT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SMA continues to serve as a member of the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program Advisory Board. <p>(8) A summary of the statistical and other MSFW-related data and reports gathered by SWAs and ES offices for the year, including an overview of the SMA's involvement in the SWA's reporting systems.</p> <p>CTDOL has both the SMA and Outreach Workers positions structured within its Performance & Accountability unit, responsible for providing support to CTDOL's Workforce Development Business System (WDBS), CTHires, as well as generating reports, providing technical support to agency programs and departments, and performing both program and administrative functions for Foreign Labor Certification (FLC), Equal Opportunity (EO) / Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the MSFW Program. The SMA is able to source and analyze performance data consistently without issues due to this structure, so much so that with the help of the Research Analysts within the unit, CTDOL was able to detect improper data reference guidance received from the Federal level. The SMA and Outreach Worker have also started to once again review MSFW registrations and correcting data on a quarterly basis, a practice that had not been implemented since CTDOL's recent transition to its new WDBS.</p> <p>(9) A summary of the training conducted for SWA personnel, including ES office personnel, on techniques for accurately reporting data.</p> <p>The SMA has trained the Outreach Worker on verifying and classifying MSFW registrations on a quarterly basis. The SMA has also trained new front line staff, as mentioned above, on the identification of MSFWs and the reasons it is considered an underserved population. This training will be extended to all Job Center staff this fall 2019.</p> <p>(10) A summary of activities related to the Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) and an explanation of how those</p>
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activities helped the State reach the goals and objectives described in the AOP. At the end of the 4-year AOP cycle, the summary must include a synopsis of the SWA's achievements over the previous 4 years to accomplish the goals set forth in the AOP, and a description of the goals which were not achieved and the steps the SWA will take to address those deficiencies.

MSFWs

For PY 2018 the SMA and the Outreach Worker carried out oral presentations, in English and Spanish, at workers' living quarters or common gathering areas. (Break areas, dining rooms) Workers were provided outreach flyers in English and Spanish that outline the services and available in the state's American Job Centers—e.g. job search database (CTHires), professional résumé critiquing, time management, computer labs and fax machines, internet access, stationery, etc.—or other useful information, such as Unemployment Compensation, New England Farm Worker's Council services (WIOA Section 167 Grantee), or Connecticut River Valley Farm Worker's Health Program (CRVFHP) and the Migrant Farm Worker Clinics. The workers were also handed informational cards (business card-sized) with contact information for CTDOL, U.S. Wage & Hour, NEFWC, Statewide Legal Services, and a host of Community Health Centers, amongst others.

In PY 2018 the collaboration between NEFWC, CTDOL's WIOA Section 167 Grantee, and the Hartford AJC has continued. A career counselor at the AJC was designated as a point of contact to ease collaboration and referrals between both offices. The SMA, along with the Outreach Worker, continued to visit NEFWC several times in the off-season to provide Workforce Information Services, assist workers with questions, and refer workers to the AJC for further services. They have also conducted UI Initial Claim Assistance workshops at the Willimantic AJC in conjunction with NEFWC, allowing the NFJP grantee to register participants for their program at the same time, and allowing AJC staff to offer services to the claimants.

Employers and Others

During PY 2018 the Outreach Worker continued to establish and develop his relationships with participants of the H2-A Program through frequent outreach visits and phone contact, offering the employers assistance with the screening of qualified (when applicable) workers during recruitment, providing technical assistance for compliance with Wagner-Peyser regulations and Federal/State employment laws, and acting as a resource and support system on employment related issues. The SMA and Outreach Worker also reached out to a number of employers not utilizing the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), educating them on the State Monitor Advocate System, the services available through the CTDOL, and the services and protections available to MSFWs. On certain occasions the SMA and Outreach Worker were successful in delivering the message, allowing them to speak to MSFWs and provide them with information on available services at American Job Centers, support services, and points of contact should any complaints or issues arise.

CTDOL has also continued to collaborate with the Puerto Rico SWA in the recruitment of job seekers to fill the positions generated by agricultural employers in Connecticut. In cases where a worker from Puerto Rico completed his/her employment contract and the employer was pleased with their performance, CTDOL and local DOL offices in Puerto Rico made note of the successful match and attempted to recruit that same individual for the same employer in the following year, thus reducing the burden of constantly retraining individuals and alleviating some of the stress that workers experience in unfamiliar working and living environments.

Other activities in PY 2018 included MSFW Program presentations and outreach sessions with NEFWC at a number of farms, and meeting / educating / learning with other stakeholders. (University of Connecticut Health Center, University of Connecticut, US Wage & Hour) The SMA continued to work closely with the University of Connecticut Health Center's Migrant Farmworker Clinics to facilitate access to health services to the farmworkers, despite the changing landscape of agricultural employers. The SMA also continued as a member of the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program Advisory Board, which works closely with the University of Connecticut Health Center and its Migrant Farm Worker Clinics, as well as Community Health Centers in the area. Lastly, the SMA also coordinated a field visit by students enrolled in the

	<p>University of Connecticut's Migrant Worker class to one of the farms participating in the H-2A program, providing the students some insight into the living and working conditions some farmworkers endure, as well as the DOL's role in employment, training, and outreach.</p> <p>(11) For significant MSFW ES offices, a summary of the functioning of the State's affirmative action staffing program under 20 CFR 653.111.</p> <p>CTDOL does not have any AJCs designated as significant MSFW offices.</p>
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E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

Connecticut's SMA has established relationships with various entities across the state and region, including the NEFWC, CTDOL's NFJP grantee. A Memorandum of Understanding was updated between the two agencies in March of 2016, hoping to maximize the number of resources available to MSFWs. The SMA has also established collaboration between the NEFWC and the Hartford AJC, affording staff from both agencies to familiarize themselves with each other's services, and establishing points of contact in each agency to ease coordination of services and referrals between both offices. CTDOL intends to establish similar relationships between NEFWC and its other AJCs going forward. The SMA has also established relationships with the Connecticut River Valley Farmworker Health Program and UConn's Migrant Farmworker Clinics, area Community Health Centers, Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, and Massachusetts Migrant Educational Program. The SMA, along with the Outreach Representative, will look to maintain and/or expand these relationships over the foreseeable future.

Analysis of Connecticut's performance data may show that certain indicators were not met at all times during this past four year period. However, CTDOL does not feel the data is commensurate with its efforts to meet the performance goals. Agricultural workers are continuously encouraged to seek better opportunities through employment and training programs at the AJCs, but certain factors, such as legal status, may be preventing part of the population from taking advantage of these services. This leaves us with a much smaller pool of measurable MSFWs, of which some may actually take advantage of the offered services, but not all, in which case the state ends up failing certain indicators. Some of the failed indicators can also be attributed to the transition period to a new database over the past two years, which affected some of the data. CTDOL will continue to provide the state's MSFWs with quantitatively proportionate, and qualitatively equivalent, services as compared to non-MSFWs. It will also continue to encourage agricultural workers to seek better opportunities through employment services and training.

The WIOA Section 167 NFJP Grantee, the New England Farm Worker's Council, has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on CTDOL's Agricultural Outreach Plan. No comments or additional recommendations were received. Connecticut's SMA has reviewed and approved CTDOL's Agricultural Outreach Plan.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a	Yes

The State Plan must include plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Include
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	63.0	65.0	64.0	66.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	60.0	63.0	61.0	64.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	6100.0	6300.0	6350.0	6400.0
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

With adoption of the Connecticut Core Standards (CCS), the new GED test, and the new Web-based National External Diploma Program (NEDP), the CSDE recognized the need to support a set of standards relevant to adult learners. Connecticut adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education released by the United States Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). These content standards align closely with the CCS. In December 2014, Connecticut applied to the

OCTAE and was selected for participation in the CCRS-in-Action project. Trainers participated in two workshops in Washington, DC, to be trained in the statewide implementation of standards. Connecticut has a policy that all adult education providers have their Adult Basic Education (ABE)/General Educational Development (GED) and Credit Diploma subject teachers trained in using the CCRS in their curriculum. Full implementation began July 1, 2017. Connecticut has committed to use of the CCRS in all adult education classes. Since the submission of the State Plan in 2016, over 600 teachers completed the English Language Arts series and over 100 teachers completed the Math series. We continue to make training available for newly hired teachers and to provide training for lead teachers in alignment of resources and lesson review to the CCRS. Technical assistance is ongoing for this effort. Beginning in 2020, online courses with videos have been developed to ensure all teachers can access training. Additionally, training in the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) has been ongoing for English language teachers.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

The State of Connecticut will award multi-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, the CSDE will publish a Notice of Availability in all major newspapers throughout the state and post the notice on the Web page of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), as well as the Web page of our core partners, the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), and the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL). The RFP will be e-mailed to all local education agencies (LEAs), higher education institutions, and to current and past providers included on a master list, which includes: community-based organizations; regional educational service centers (RESCs); housing authorities; volunteer organizations; the Connecticut Department of Corrections (DOC); other correctional facilities and institutions; and to all providers and Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). A bidders' conference will be publicly advertised with the Notice of Availability and will be held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

Agencies that are eligible for funding through the CSDE, provided they have demonstrated effectiveness, may include: LEAs; community-based organizations or faith-based organizations; volunteer literacy organizations; institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals; a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries or authorities described above; and a partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

Grants will be awarded to agencies that have demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities to individuals who: have attained 17 years of age, are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in a secondary school under Connecticut state law; and who are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or are an English language learner (ELL).

Local grants will be distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) purposes outlined in the WIOA and have demonstrated effectiveness in: (1) assisting adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; (2) assisting adults who are parents or family members to becoming a full partner in the educational development of their children; (3) assisting adults in completing high school; (4) promoting transitions from adult education to postsecondary education and training through career pathways; (5) assisting immigrants and ELLs to improve reading, writing, math, speaking, and comprehensive skills in

the English language; and acquiring an understanding of American government, individual freedom and responsibilities of citizenship.

The CSDE will make funding available to eligible providers in each of the five Service Delivery Areas (SDA) in Connecticut. The Department, in conjunction with each WDB, will assess SDA needs and WDB goals. Eligible providers will select the appropriate priority area when drafting and submitting the RFP to the CSDE. The RFP will be published for at least six-weeks to allow sufficient time between RFP distribution and proposal submission to the CSDE. RFPs will be evaluated by a review team comprised of interagency staff and experts in each priority area. Interagency participants will include representatives of the CSDE, the WDB, One-Stop partners, and Vocational Rehabilitation partners. The review team will evaluate each proposal using a standardized evaluation form based on required federal, state and regional criteria published in the RFP (including the considerations listed in the WIOA, Title II, Section 231). An internal edit check will be conducted by CSDE staff to ensure compliance with the requirements of Title II of the WIOA, all applicable laws and RFP criteria.

The CSDE will use the following process to distribute funds to approved applicants: not less than 82.5 percent of the grant funds shall be used to award grants and contracts under Section 231 of the WIOA and to carry out Section 225 of the WIOA (Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals); not more than 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out Section 225; not more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds shall be used to carry out State Leadership activities under Section 223 of the WIOA; and not more than 5 percent of the grant funds, or \$85,000, whichever is greater, shall be used for administrative expenses of the eligible agency. Using the evaluation criteria published in the RFP, proposal reviews will involve a standardized evaluation process which includes the following items: the eligible provider's response to RFP requirements; the accuracy of the itemized budget in meeting line item limits and definitions; and the considerations listed in the WIOA, Title II, Section 231. The weight of each consideration in the evaluation process will be defined in the RFP. Evidence required to support each consideration listed below has been defined and is printed in *Italics* with the corresponding consideration.

All allowable costs for the federally funded Adult Basic Education program are defined in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87. This document will be used to determine reasonableness, allowability and allocability of costs. All costs must be supported by source documentation.

Using the evaluation criteria published in the RFP, proposal reviews will involve a standardized evaluation process, which includes the following items: the eligible provider's response to RFP requirements; the accuracy of the itemized budget in meeting line item limits and definitions; the provision of adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities; workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; and the considerations listed in the WIOA, Title II, Section 231(e) (listed below).

The weight of each consideration in the evaluation process will be defined in the RFP. Evidence required to support each consideration has been defined and is printed within parentheses with the corresponding consideration. The assessment of each grant application will involve an intense evaluation of the ability of the eligible provider to meet the literacy needs of the area and to comply with the expectations and statutes described within the WIOA. The review process and scoring rubric will consider the following 13 considerations:

1. The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to: A. regional needs as identified in the local plan under the WIOA, Title II, Section 108 (as evidenced by a description of regional needs and how the applicant will be responsive to those needs); and B. serving individuals in the community who were identified as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals with low literacy skills or who are ELLs (as evidenced by an objective statement of need accompanied by a recruitment and retention plan which targets these individuals).
2. The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities (as evidenced by an objective

statement of need accompanied by a recruitment and retention plan which targets these individuals)

3. Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals to meet state-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in the WIOA, Title II, Section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals with low literacy (as evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) and annual reviews for previously funded providers, and as evidenced by comparable objective performance measures which demonstrate successful student outcomes for new eligible providers).
4. The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under the WIOA, Title II, Section 108, as well as the activities and services of the One-Stop partners (as evidenced by description of proposed activities and strategies and goals and how the provider plans to align them).
5. Whether the eligible provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality; based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction (as evidenced by a program design suitable to achieve applicable performance measures— appropriateness of program design may be demonstrated by past performance of successful outcomes or documentation of a similar program design and associated outcomes).
6. Whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider are based on best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice (as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum).
7. Whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services and systems lead to improved performance (as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum and the accessibility of hardware and software applications as appropriate).
8. Whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum which focus on skills needed for postsecondary education and training, the workplace and citizenship).
9. Whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the state, where applicable, and who have access to high-quality professional development, including through electronic means (as evidenced by appropriate degrees, certifications and trainings).
10. Whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local WDBs, One-Stop Centers, job training programs, social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways (as evidenced by formal collaborations and the commitment of the provider to assess and address the literacy and non-literacy support services of participants).

11. Whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with federal, state, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs (as evidenced by program schedules and documentation of support services available).
12. Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with the WIOA, Title II, Section 116) and to monitor program performance (as evidenced by prior participation in or a commitment to participate in the eligible agency's Connecticut Competency System and Connecticut Adult Reporting System and to submit comprehensive, timely and accurate data).
13. Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs (as evidenced by area demographic data) and Section 203 of the WIOA (the Adult Education and Literacy Activities).

The CSDE will require eligible providers receiving grant funding to carry out corrections education or education for other institutionalized individuals and use the grant funds to operate the following adult education programs/activities: ABE instruction is designed for adults seeking a high school diploma who are functioning below the secondary school level and lack the basic reading, writing and numeracy skills necessary to function effectively as workers, parents and citizens. Instruction can be individualized or offered in a classroom or a learning lab. Persons completing ABE are prepared to benefit from secondary level instruction.

ABE educational functioning levels are as follows:

- a. Beginning ABE Literacy (Grade Levels 0-1.9);
- b. Beginning Basic Education (Grade Levels 2.0-3.9);
 - (a.) Low Intermediate Basic Education (Grade Levels 4.0-5.9); and
 - (b.) High Intermediate Basic Education (Grade Levels 6.0-8.9).

Adult Secondary Education (ASE) Connecticut Adult Education offers three distinct pathways for adults to attain a high school diploma:

1. Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD): The AHSCD program is a prescribed plan, process and structure for earning a required number of academic and elective credits. The provider must be an LEA or RESC. Credits toward a local diploma must be obtained through a prescribed plan. Each provider/town can enhance the basic AHSCD program but must adhere to the minimum state requirements: 1) use certified teachers and counselors; 2) adhere to CSDE requirements regarding assessment, enrollment, accountability and reporting; 3) meet required credit standards; and 4) ensure that a one credit course offers a minimum of 48 instructional hours. An adult who successfully completes the required credits of the AHSCD program is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

2. General Educational Development (GED): Adults who have not completed high school must demonstrate, through an examination, the attainment of academic skills and concepts normally acquired through completion of a high school program. Applicants for this examination must be at least 17 years of age and officially withdrawn from school for at least six months. Individuals who pass the GED Tests are awarded a Connecticut State High School Diploma. GED instructional programs, provided throughout the state in local school districts and a variety of other instructional sites, help individuals to prepare for this rigorous examination.

3. National External Diploma Program (NEDP): This program provides a secondary school credential designed for adults who have gained skills through life experiences and demonstrated competence in a particular job, talent or academic area. The NEDP is an online portfolio assessment program that offers no classroom instruction. An adult who successfully completes the portfolio assessment, as required, is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs must integrate functional life and employability skills into the curriculum, incorporate technology into the instructional process, and provide

comprehensive counseling, transition and support services in collaboration with other community or human services organizations.

ASE educational functioning levels are as follows:

a. Low Adult Secondary Education (Grade Levels 9.0-10.9); and

b. High Adult Secondary Education (Grade Levels 11.0-12.9).

Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities

Workforce Education Services Programs will provide workforce preparation skills, including literacy instruction, employability skills, career exploration and development, and links to employment, employment services and other options in order to respond to the evolving needs of the business community and promote individual self-sufficiency. Workforce readiness programs offer instruction to support transition to work, entry-level employment, and reentry into the workforce for unemployed individuals.

Family Literacy Activities: Family literacy activities are services that make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs. Activities include the following: parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement and economic self-sufficiency; interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children; training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. Family Literacy Services are to benefit the child, the parent and the community. Program services will focus on enabling parents to become full partners in the education of their children and provide workforce preparation. Services will be of sufficient intensity and duration to make sustainable changes in the family.

English Language Acquisition Activities: English language acquisition activities include programs of instruction that are designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language; and that lead to (1) the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and (2) transition to postsecondary education and training or employment. Americanization/Citizenship programs include instruction designed for foreign-born adults who wish to become United States citizens. Persons completing this program are prepared to pursue citizenship through the prescribed process of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

English as a Second Language (ESL): ESL instruction is designed for adults who have limited proficiency in the English language or whose native language is not English. ESL programs assist individuals to improve their English skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to find or maintain employment, attain citizenship, become more involved with their children's schooling and make greater use of community resources. Instruction is provided in English as a unifying means of serving the broad ethnic diversity of limited English speaking adults.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics): The term "integrated English literacy and civics education": means education services provided to ELLs who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation and may include workforce training.

EL/Civics programs must contain the following: contextualized instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation and U.S. history and government; program design and goals that focus on preparing adults for employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to

economic self-sufficiency; curriculum focus on skills that will provide information and support in the skills necessary for the workplace; coordination with the local workforce system and activities provided in combination with integrated education/training (IET) activities; improvement of literacy skills including speaking, reading, writing and numeracy in order to provide learners with the skills to apply English and mathematics accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace and academic settings; opportunities for experiential learning in which participants are actively engaged in community pursuits are included in the program design; utilization of research-based instructional models that have proven effective in teaching individuals to read, write and speak English effectively; collaboration with community agencies that offer services to limited English proficient populations; and embedding technology literacy into the core curriculum. Additional program activities directly related to the use of these funds include: participation in career pathways exploration and distance-learning activities that impact competence in the workplace; integration of various hand-held technologies into classroom work, including tablets and smart phones; creation of video oral histories; exposure to basic math vocabulary and interpretation of charts, tables and graphs; knowledge of the American education system with special focus on addressing the needs of families new to the U.S. school system; and cross-cultural perspectives, civic responsibility, democracy topics and independent projects.

Integrated EL/Civics Education also provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Workforce Preparation Activities or Integrated Education and Training - The CSDE will continue to assist the DOL with expanding the development and implementation of the I-BEST delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials. Adult Education programs will work with WDB areas to provide I-BEST training to Jobs First Employment Service (JFES) clients who receive Temporary Family Assistance (TFA). Programs must demonstrate a commitment to provide appropriate support services to students enrolled in the integrated pathway program. These services may include, but are not limited to, tutoring or other academic supports, college navigation support, career planning, transportation assistance, and/or childcare.

Once grants are awarded, mid-year and year-end evaluative reports will require that program providers submit a current program profile, which will ensure that all projects have met the standards established by the eligible entity (CSDE) and that all goals have been achieved. Projects not meeting the established standards will be identified for the CSDE's intervention, which may include onsite technical assistance, a decrease in funding or the elimination of funding.

Special Rule

Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 (17 in Connecticut) and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS
Each eligible agency using funds provided under programs for correctional education and other institutionalized individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

The CSDE will reserve no more than 20 percent of its federal grant received under the WIOA to provide programs for correctional education and education for other institutionalized

individuals as described in Section 225 of the Act. Funding under Section 225 will include the following correctional institutionalized settings: prisons, jail reformatories, detention centers, halfway houses, community-based rehabilitation centers or other similar institutions designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. The CSDE shall also require that each eligible provider using grant funds under Section 225 to carry out a program for criminal offenders in a correctional institution shall give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

The CSDE shall require that each eligible provider use the grant funds to operate education programs as follows: Adult Basic Education (ABE); English Literacy Acquisition; and secondary school completion (Adult High School Diploma).

Corrections Education and other Institutionalized Individuals or Special Populations

In addition to the institutionalized population, grantees may include programs for individuals with mental illness and referrals from the Bureau of Aging and Disability Services (formerly known as the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)) nontraditional populations impacted by incarceration, disabilities and homelessness. Projects not meeting the established standards will be identified for the CSDE's intervention, which may include onsite technical assistance, a decrease in funding or the elimination of funding.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The CSDE will establish and operate EL/Civics Education programs as a part of its adult education program. The term "Integrated English literacy and civics education" means education services provided to ELLs who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training.

CSDE will issue a RFP for Integrated EL/Civics Education. The RFP requires the following for funded programs: education services provided to ELLs who are adults, *including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries* that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training. For the purpose of educational and career advancement, IEL/Civics also provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce readiness activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

IEL/Civics programs must offer contextualized instruction in literacy and English language acquisition; the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; naturalization procedures; civic participation and U.S. history and government as essential components of the program and in addition, must address the following: program design and goals that focus on preparing adults for employment in in-demand industries and occupations that leads to economic self-sufficiency; curriculum focus that will provide information and support in the skills necessary for the workplace; coordination with the local workforce system and activities provided in combination with IET activities; improvement of literacy skills including speaking, reading, writing and numeracy in order to provide learners with the skills to apply English and mathematics accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace and academic settings; and opportunities for experiential learning in which participants are actively engaged in community

To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, the CSDE will publish a Notice of Availability in all major Connecticut newspapers and post the notice on the CSDE's Web page as well as our partners' web pages. The RFP will be mailed to all current grant-funded providers and WDBs. A bidders' conference will be publicly advertised with the Notice of Availability and

will be held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

Local grants will be distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of AEFLA Purposes outlined in the WIOA Section 243. The CSDE will make funding available to each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas. In conjunction with each WDB, the CSDE will help to assess local area needs and WDB goals.

The RFP will establish a minimum six-week turnaround time between RFP distribution and proposal submission to the CSDE. A review team comprised of interagency staff and experts in each priority area will evaluate proposals responding to the RFP. Interagency participants will include representatives of the CSDE, the WDB and One-Stop partners. The review team will evaluate each proposal using a standardized evaluation form based on required federal, state and regional criteria published in the RFP (including the considerations listed in Section 231 (e). Eligible providers must demonstrate in their application for funds the manner in which the program will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities. These activities can be provided directly or through collaboration with the WIOA or other community partners.

Once grants are awarded, mid-year and year-end evaluative reports will require that program providers submit a current program profile, which will ensure that all projects have met the standards established by the eligible entity (CSDE) and that all goals have been achieved. Projects not meeting the established standards will be identified for the CSDE's intervention, which may include on-site technical assistance, a decrease in funding or the elimination of funding.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

Description of Required Activities:

1. The CSDE will work with other core programs and One-Stop partners to ensure that adult education and literacy activities are in alignment and to develop career pathways which provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. The CSDE will collaborate with the DOL to assist local providers in partnering with One-Stop Centers to develop career pathways and provide access to employment and training services. Professional development will be provided to local programs, including orientation to adult education programs and services for One-Stop partners and other agencies.

The CSDE will ensure that training and technical assistance will address meeting regional needs and demonstrating alignment between proposed activities and services with core partners. It will also assist local programs in becoming familiar with the regional/state plan to determine how it affects their programs. The CSDE will also work with local programs to establish stronger linkages with partners such as local schools, WDBs, One Stop centers, and job training programs.

2. Connecticut has instituted high quality professional development programs to improve instruction. Training will be provided related to the specific needs of adult learners and information about models and promising practices will be disseminated. To enhance program quality and ensure continued progress in meeting the Core and Additional Indicators of Performance, the CSDE shall award one or more grants to eligible providers to deliver State Leadership activities, primarily professional development activities, with funds made available under this subtitle. In order to meet the various needs of our state, the CSDE may enter into partnerships with other states and/or the federal government in order to collaboratively fund projects that will meet individual needs and accomplish common goals. The CSDE shall not use more than 12.5 percent of the funds awarded under this subtitle for State Leadership activities. The CSDE will deliver a majority of its State Leadership and professional development services through the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN). The CSDE's professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of Connecticut's Adult Education

State Plan and consists of professional development basics and activities related to the implementation of career pathways.

3. The CSDE will provide technical assistance to local grantees in: the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on scientifically valid research, available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, distance education, staff training and content standards; the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; and assistance in the use of technology, including staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies. Although providers find serving students with low literacy skills, who are ELL, or individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities, as their strength, providers need assistance with curriculum materials and teaching strategies/best practices for students who are non-literate in their native language and with developing a scope and sequence curriculum for low level literacy skills and individuals with disabilities. In addition to providing more resources for math instruction, the CSDE will also provide technical assistance in serving adults with special learning needs and disabilities, including disability awareness sessions, resource and instructional materials, accommodation and instruction planning workshops, train-the-trainer sessions, referral information, and telephone consultation concerning program issues.

4. The CSDE will conduct program monitoring and evaluation to ensure compliance with federal and state funding requirements and to determine the effectiveness of programs in meeting the needs of the adult population and will disseminate information about models and proven or promising practices within the state. The CSDE has in place a data reporting system for each local provider, the CARS. The CARS system can measure performance outcomes. The CSDE has developed a formalized follow-up and reporting process to report on the core indicators of obtaining or retaining employment and entering postsecondary education according to the National Reporting System requirements. The follow-up and reporting process includes data sharing with other state agencies, including the DOL wage information system. The CSDE will participate in the statewide data system, which will assist the CSDE in working seamlessly with other partners while protecting the privacy rights of individuals. To provide the core service of performance and cost information for the WIOA, Title II, Section 231 providers to the One-Stop system, the eligible agency will develop a report which includes each program's success in meeting the state-adjusted levels of performance. This data will assist potential clients in identifying an appropriate adult education or literacy program in the local area.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

Description of Permissible Activities:

1. The CSDE will provide training and technical assistance to local programs in technology applications, translation technology and distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. Training and technology assistance to local programs in technology applications, especially in the area of Web-based communication (social media, phone apps, etc.) will be provided, as well as assistance in finding access to computers.
2. The CSDE will develop and disseminate curricula, including literacy curricula combined with the College and Career Readiness Standards where reading comprehension is tied to prior knowledge and is a critical component in the classroom and workplace. The dimensions prioritize cultivating students' knowledge base through reading and writing about content-rich material.
3. The CSDE will develop content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways. Connecticut Competency System (CCS) training sessions will be offered to both adult education and the workforce development community. The CCS is

an integral part of the CSDE's career pathways, standards-based framework utilizing the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) to connect curriculum, assessment, and instruction that is able to capture progress made by adult education learners.

4. The CSDE will provide assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title, including meeting the state-adjusted levels of performance. The CSDE will provide technical assistance in implementing the CCS for appraisal, instruction and assessment in a life-skills and an employability context, including new teacher training, CCS Facilitator training, and One-Stop partner staff training, as well as the ordering and dissemination of CASAS curricula materials used in conjunction with the Connecticut Competency System. The CARS system will collect student demographic, attendance, assessment and outcome information for each student in the adult education program. The CARS system generates statewide and local demographic and performance assessment reports used for program planning, management and accountability. Data from the system allows the State to assess the effectiveness of local programs by measuring performance outcomes.
5. The CSDE will continue to partner with community colleges and other institutions of higher learning to assist adults to transition to postsecondary education and training. Training and technical assistance will be provided on effective methods of transitioning students. The CSDE will ensure that training and technical assistance will be provided, especially in areas such as employer engagement, the institution of career counselor position, and/or enhanced job responsibilities for current staff emphasizing transitions. The CSDE will also provide assistance in the implementation of training programs that assist adults in obtaining economic self-sufficiency.
6. The CSDE will work with the DOL to expand its I-BEST delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials to Integrated EL/Civics programs. Training and technical assistance will be provided to local grantees for the integration of literacy and English language instruction. CSDE will provide activities for the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers. The CSDE will assist local programs by sharing effective models, assisting local programs in engaging employers, and how to partner successfully with other agencies to place students in employment.
7. The CSDE will provide technical assistance and training to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities by identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition; and taking into consideration the following: 1. State-adopted academic standards. 2. The current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the state or outlying area. 3. The primary indicators of performance described in the WIOA, Title II, Section 116. 4. Standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the state. CCRS have been incorporated into all workshops in math, reading and writing. Working with ELA students in the area of workplace training is still needed. The CSDE will work with local programs to identify a variety of curricula for workplace training.
8. The CSDE will develop and pilot strategies for improving teacher quality and retention. Training staff will provide sessions on learning styles and needs, facilitating adult learning, planning for instruction, and monitoring student progress.
9. The CSDE will assist in the development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or ELLs. Connecticut will continue to be a member of the New England Literacy Resource Center, part of World Education. The membership provides professional development for teachers and administrators on evidence-based practices; on college and career readiness, ESOL

instruction, learner persistence, using curriculum standards, integrating technology in instruction, program design and management.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Performance Accountability

Performance Accountability assesses the effectiveness of grantees in achieving continuous improvement of adult education and literacy activities. The performance outcome measures shall consist of the following core indicators:

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
4. The percentage of program participants who obtain either a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year of exit from program;
5. The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains towards such a credential or employment; and
6. The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers established pursuant to clause (iv)

Setting Targets: Each fiscal year, the CSDE negotiates proposed target percentages for each of the core indicators of performance with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). Each local eligible program is responsible for meeting or exceeding the negotiated performance targets. Each program shall analyze progress towards meeting the targets on an ongoing basis. Each program must utilize the approved standardized assessments that provide the framework needed to measure program effectiveness.

Central to the evaluation process is an assessment of performance measures established by CSDE to focus on continual progress, successful completion of the program area, and successful transition to a next step of employment, postsecondary education, or occupational training. For example, CSDE's performance measures for secondary completion programs focus on interim student progress by requiring providers to report on the number of students who pass one or more subsections of the GED practice test, earn one or more credits toward an adult high school diploma, or complete four or more competency areas of the NEDP and requiring them to report on the number of students who earn a diploma or its recognized equivalent. Incorporating this performance measure into the evaluation process will ensure that the eligible agency and local provider assess each student's progress toward program completion and analyze significant changes indicated by this interim progress indicator.

The CSDE has also developed four Additional Indicators of Program Performance that require providers to address all aspects of program operation: recruitment, curriculum and instruction, support services and professional development. These additional indicators ensure that programs will focus on long-term planning for program development and community responsiveness rather than focusing solely on current year issues and achievements. These indicators also ensure that adult education providers develop learner and community-responsive programs and curricula so they can become an integral part of the local education system as it works toward lifelong learning and self-sufficiency for all community members, especially those most in need of literacy services. Core and additional Indicators of Performance will become a focal point for annual and onsite monitoring reviews and the basis for formative evaluation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To improve the quality and effectiveness of adult education programs, the CSDE will conduct two evaluation processes: an annual desk audit for all providers, and an onsite monitoring evaluation for selected providers.

Onsite Monitoring

Each year, an onsite monitoring evaluation will be conducted for a minimum of 25 percent of federally funded adult education programs to determine the effectiveness of adult education and literacy programs and activities. All newly funded programs will be monitored, as will all programs that had noncompliance or RFP requirement issues during the previous year's monitoring. These evaluations shall, at a minimum, consist of assessing the following areas:

- a) Compliance with all applicable laws and RFP guidelines, including ADA 504 and Section 427 GEPA;
- b) Program management and operations, including scheduling and locations, as well as staff credentials;
- c) Outreach, recruitment and retention practices, including individuals with multiple barriers to education;
- d) Curriculum and instruction and use of technology;
- e) Support services including counseling and transition services;
- f) Professional development opportunities;
- g) Student intake, assessment and documentation procedures;
- h) Documentation of the program's ability to assist adults in gaining employment, achieving self-sufficiency, and/or developing family literacy practices;
- i) Documentation of the program's progress in meeting the performance measures set for each applicable Core Indicator of Performance;
- j) Documentation of the program's ability to meet the Additional Indicators of Program Quality.

Written reports of the onsite monitoring will be given to programs monitored. During the visit, local programs will have to submit a corrective action plan for any deficiencies noted. The CSDE will observe classes and talk with teachers and program staff to determine if ideas from professional development are being implemented.

Desk Monitoring

For the annual desk audit review, each provider will submit an assessment of Performance Measures and individual program goals, as well as an annual expenditure report including all relevant fiscal records to facilitate an effective audit. Each program will also be required to submit data containing all program and student information stored in CARS, including demographic, assessment and outcome data for each student enrolled. If a local program does not meet its outcome measures, it must complete a corrective action plan outlining how to make necessary improvements.

Professional Development

The CSDE will provide professional development to local programs to improve program quality. Instruction will be designed to (1) improve instruction in the essential components of reading instruction; (2) instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners; (3) instruction provided by volunteers or paid personnel; and (4) dissemination of information about models and promising practices. Participants will be asked to evaluate the training sessions to determine if the sessions fit their needs. Changes are made to future workshops based on those evaluations. Onsite monitoring and evaluation of local instructional practices will be completed to determine if professional development is being implemented.

The CSDE will provide performance outcome targets and meet the expected levels of performance demonstrated by Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) for adult education and literacy activities authorized under Title II for the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2024. The CSDE will meet the U.S. Department of Education proposed target percentages for each given year to reflect programs' progress toward continuous improvement in performance.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender; race; national origin; color; disability; or age. Grants will be awarded based on applicant's description of steps to be taken to overcome these barriers based on local circumstances, and determined whether these or other barriers may prevent students, teachers, etc., from access or participation in the federally-funded project or activity.

Description should include assurances that, in designing their projects, applicants for Federal funds address equity concerns that may affect the ability of certain potential beneficiaries to fully participate in the project and to achieve to high standards.

Onsite monitoring evaluations will be conducted for a minimum of 25 percent of federally funded adult education programs to determine the effectiveness of adult education and literacy programs and activities. All newly funded programs will be monitored, as will all programs that had noncompliance or RFP requirement issues during the previous year's monitoring. These evaluations shall, at a minimum, consist of assessing the following areas: a) Compliance with all applicable laws and RFP guidelines, including ADA 504 and Section 427 GEPA; b) Program management and operations, including scheduling and locations, as well as staff credentials; c) Outreach, recruitment and retention practices, including individuals with multiple barriers to education; d) Curriculum and instruction and use of technology; e) Support services including counseling and transition services; f) Professional development opportunities; g) Student intake, assessment and documentation procedures; h) Documentation of the program's ability to assist adults in gaining employment, achieving self-sufficiency, and/or developing family literacy practices; i) Documentation of the program's progress in meeting the performance measures set for each applicable Core Indicator of Performance; j) Documentation of the program's ability to meet the Additional Indicators of Program Quality.

Written reports of the onsite monitoring will be given to programs monitored. During the visit, local programs will have to submit a corrective action plan for any deficiencies noted. The CSDE will observe classes and talk with teachers and program staff to determine if ideas from professional development are being implemented.

For the annual desk audit review, each provider will submit an assessment of Performance Measures and individual program goals, as well as an annual expenditure report including all

relevant fiscal records to facilitate an effective audit. Each program will also be required to submit data containing all program and student information stored in CARS, including demographic, assessment and outcome data for each student enrolled. If a local program does not meet its outcome measures, it must complete a corrective action plan outlining how to make necessary improvements.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	55.0%	50.0%	57.0%	50.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	71.0%	50.0	72.0%	50.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6500	\$6500	\$6700	\$6700
Credential Attainment Rate	55.0%	55.0	56.0%	56.0
Measurable Skill Gains	45.0%	45.0	46.0%	46.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The mission of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is to provide assessment, advice and recommendations to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the Bureau) and others regarding coordination and effectiveness of programs and strategies that promote community-based competitive employment for persons with disabilities. The SRC maintains an ongoing collaboration with BRS. The SRC is comprised of volunteers, many of whom are current or former vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers or family members of VR consumers. They are appointed by the Governor to review and assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational rehabilitation services provided for individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment.

The SRC has participated in the following endeavors in FY 2019 and 2020

1. Development of the BRS 2020 State Plan updates;
2. 2018 Statewide Annual VR program Meeting;
3. National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Teleconferences;
4. SRC Meetings (six per year);
5. Review of the 722 Report regarding Administrative Hearing Outcomes;
6. Review of the updated VR Policy Manual and Order of Selection criteria;
7. Participate in the 2018 Public Meeting; and
8. Revise Consumer Manual.

WIOA

In July 2014, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to unify the state programs that provide employment services. This bill established some significant changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. BRS Director David Doukas continues to inform the SRC of program changes and implementation of various requirements of the WIOA

regulations. The SRC has worked to better understand WIOA requirements and has offered feedback related to changes being proposed and implemented for employment services for people with disabilities. The SRC also began to contribute to the development of new policies, both as they relate to new WIOA requirements, and changes in the delivery of certain services. The Director continues to be transparent to the SRC on all aspects of VR and has a strong relationship with the SRC.

BRS Public Meetings

BRS and the SRC hosted a public meeting in September 2018 to review VR implementation of Order of Selection and also to review the updated VR Policy Manual. Consumers, their families, community rehabilitation providers and others interested in the VR program were invited to review the draft of Order of Selection criteria and the Policy Manual.

The SRC is in the process of collaborating with Central Connecticut State University to implement a comprehensive needs assessment for BRS. This is intended to be implemented in 2020.

SRC Recommendations to BRS

Outlined below is the designated state unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The SRC recommends BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, particularly with Pre-ETS (Level Up), transferring to an adult counselor. In addition, the SRC would like to see expectations of staff regarding response time to consumer follow up. The SRC is interested in reviewing outlines and procedures to determine how consumer cases are transferred to new counselors and consumer follow up.

The SRC would like the following information:

1. What is the process and protocol for procedures related to Pre-ETS (Level Up)?
2. What is the timeline for follow up once a referral for services has been made?
3. What is the process for transferring to adult VR services?

: The SRC has a continued interest in the progress and outcomes of BRS multi state agency collaborative agreements including: The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)/ American Job Centers (AJC) and Department of Labor (DOL) collaborative outcomes.

Recommendation 3: The SRC would like semi-annual updates on the effectiveness of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) to determine if the number of vendors and scope of existing contracts results in an effective service delivery model. Specific information outlining services provided for consumers with communication barriers is requested.

Recommendation 4: Pre-ETS (Level Up), report on the implementation of Level up including the current status of the program and any future adjustment planned to better serve the community.

The SRC also requests semi-annual updates on the production and outcomes of the Level Up program.

Recommendation 5: The SRC requests information on the Order of Selection and asks to be included in discussions in the continuation of and/or the removal of this.

Recommendation 6: The SRC recommends that BRS expand the number of Industry Specific Training Programs that will result in the recruitment and employment of more VR consumers. The SRC also recommends that the Bureau's relationship with ISTP host employers be leveraged to provide work-based learning opportunities within those industries. The SRC contends that this will provide Pre-ETS (Level Up) students exposure to a pathway for training and employment post-graduation.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

BRS Response 1: BRS agrees with these recommendations and is willing to provide written policies and procedures pertaining to the Level Up program to the SRC. We would also welcome the opportunity to present these policies and procedures at a future SRC meeting.

See below for additional responses:

1. Students potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services ages 16-21 who currently have an IEP, 504 Plan or documented disability and are connected to a secondary or post-secondary education program may participate in Pre-ETS (Level Up) services. To get started, interested students can speak to their designated high school personnel or contact the Level Up Supervisor to get more information and connect to a counselor. The best time to connect to services is two years prior to high school graduation. Level Up Counselors can consult on cases that are not open if special circumstances are present.

Level Up services are provided directly by Level Up Counselors or through contracted community rehabilitation providers. These services can take place on and off school grounds and during, or after school hours. When a student enters their final year of high school, the Level Up Counselor will speak to the student to determine if they are interested in applying for Vocational Rehabilitation Services. If the student is interested, the Level Up Counselor will assist the student with the application process.

1. Level Up staff follow the agency guidance on getting back to consumers within 48-72 hours unless counselors are out of the office on vacation or unexpectedly out of the office in which case the counselor will notify their supervisor for required follow-up.
1. The transfer process has been moved up this year. Level Up (LU) Cases are already in process of moving to adult services. Typically, all LU VRCs have a conversation with LU consumers and their families (if they are involved) and talk about adult services-- specifically how to apply, the eligibility criteria and what services the program offers. If a LU Consumer is interested in applying, then the case is transferred to an adult counselor. Cases are assigned to the office of the consumer's choice and based on caseload size, adult school liaisons list and counselor availability.

BRS Response 2: BRS continues to maintain Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/A) and active, robust partnerships with various state agencies. We are committed to routinely sharing information about these collaborations and will continue to do so.

BRS Response 3: BRS routinely analyzes this information and is willing to provide it as requested.

BRS Response 4: BRS agrees to provide semi-annual status updates concerning the Level Up program. There are several changes planned for FFY 20 and this will be communicated to the SRC.

BRS Response 5: As discussed in subsequent sections of this State Plan it is the Bureau's intention to remove Order of Selection effective July 1, 2020. The SRC has already been notified of this change and will be included in future planning.

BRS Response 6: BRS continues to remain committed to engaging with businesses. The Connect-Ability Staffing Solutions (CASS) responsible for business outreach and development throughout Connecticut has expanded their capacity. We are hopeful that more business connections and more employment opportunities will be achieved for VR consumers. We agree with the SRC recommendation to approach ITSP host employers to facilitate work-based learning opportunities for Pre-ETS (Level Up) consumers.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Designated State unit did not reject any of the Council's input or recommendations.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is not requesting a Waiver of Statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Not applicable.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

Not applicable.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

BRS has Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the following entities:

1. Social Security Administration: Information Exchange Agreement to receive data regarding consumers' work history.
2. The Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs MOU enables collaboration of services for veterans.
3. The Charter Oak MOA enables BRS to continue to host and offer the Connect-Ability Distance Learning Initiative (DLI) which provides over 50 free online e-learning modules for job seekers with disabilities, employers, Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP), vocational rehabilitation staff and others. One module is specific to Career Counseling for sub-minimum wage employees in Connecticut. Modules are accessible and some are available in Spanish and/or American Sign Language. BRS also uses the DLI as a training registration platform for VR staff trainings.
4. The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) MOU enables collaboration and coordination of vocational rehabilitation services with the 121 program.
5. Through the Secure Jobs Connecticut Pilot, a Letter of Agreement enables BRS and the Departments of Education (SDE), Housing (DOH), Labor (DOL), and Social Services (DSS) to collaborate with the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, Fairfield County's Community Foundation, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Liberty Bank Foundation, the Melville Charitable Trust, the Office of Early Childhood, the Partnership for Strong Communities, the United Way of Greater New Haven, and the United Way of CT to end homelessness by 2022 for families with children and youth.
6. BRS has an active agreement with The University of Alabama to train student interns.
7. BRS has an MOU with the Department of Labor (DOL) which enables the exchange of client information for the purposes of federal reporting and performance accountability under WIOA Legislation. BRS client records are matched to DOL's Unemployment Compensation Database enabling BRS to report on consumers employed during the 2nd and 4th quarters post exit, as well as the median earnings in the 2nd quarter post exit. In addition, this MOU enables the exchange of information related to program involvement among all participating WIOA partners, and a centralized location for the development of WIOA Unique ID's.
8. BRS has executed a 3-way MOU with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) for the exchange of client records necessary for BRS to process cost reimbursement cases with the Social Security Administration (SSA). Under this agreement, BRS runs a batch file process with DSS. A resultant file is generated by DSS using DOL Unemployment Compensation data to assist BRS with identifying cases that qualify for cost reimbursement through The Social Security Administration (SSA).
9. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) MOU enables coordinated vocational employment services for people with intellectual disabilities to minimize overlap of resources.

10. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) MOA enables BRS to partially fund a shared position to improve service delivery and collaboration for consumers of both programs.
 11. Customized Employment (CE) Services are in response to the requirements of the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and will necessitate an MOU with the Department of Developmental Services, the Connecticut State Department of Education and the local school systems. Customized Employment comprises a set of Pre-ETS (Level Up) designed to ensure that the employment seeker is the primary driver of the outcome received. CE is best used to meet the needs of employment seekers with disabilities who have not been or are unlikely to be successful with traditional, demand-side employment.
 12. BRS and the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) are finalizing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to facilitate their shared commitment to the coordination and timely provision of necessary transition services for youth with disabilities in Connecticut. SDE, in collaboration with the State Educational Resource Centers (SERC) will assist in the provision and coordination of required Pre-ETS (Level Up) to improve post-school outcomes of students with disabilities ages 16 to 21, in the areas of competitive employment, postsecondary education and independent living skills through the provision of statewide services.
 13. BRS and the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) are completing an MOU that will facilitate the electronic provision of data to assist in determining eligibility of businesses who have applied for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program and have hired individual consumers of BRS services. The federal WOTC Program, administered by DOL, is designed to encourage employers to hire individuals who have consistently had the most difficulty in securing employment by giving federal tax credits to employers.
 14. BRS will be entering into an MOU with Central Connecticut State University to develop a comprehensive needs assessment in 2020.
 15. BRS has an executed MOU with the State Department of Education (SDE) to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, including Pre-ETS (Level Up). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) require interagency cooperation for accomplishing transition preparation, planning, and implementation relating to coordination of special services to children and youth.
2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is the “lead agency” for the Connecticut Assistive Technology (AT) Act Program, therefore a MOA is not needed. The Program Director for the AT Act program serves in the role of AT Consultant to the VR program and a strong relationship exists. The AT Act program operates an AT device lending service specifically for VR consumers. The Program Director provides AT demonstrations when needed and assists VR consumers in participating in reuse activities. Additionally, VR consumers utilize the alternate financing program operated by the AT Act program to assist in paying for needed devices that the VR program may not be able to provide, such as vehicles, which can then be modified by the VR program.

The following are formal agreements that have been established to provide activities under Section 4 of the AT Act:

1.
 - a. The State Education Resource Center (SERC) MOU enables SERC to provide Assistive Technology device demonstrations and loans primarily to educators, other school personnel, family members and students.
 - b. The Southern Connecticut State University MOA enables laptops and iPads with specific software to be loaned to CT K–12 schools for up to four months to allow students to try devices before they are purchased.

- c. Department of Labor MOA allowed us to establish Assistive Technology device demonstration centers at two American Job Centers (AJC) in CT, allowing AJC customers to borrow the devices while they participate in AJC services, as well as allow employers to borrow the devices for their employees with disabilities.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

None.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

None.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

1. The Office of the Attorney General MOA enables review and approval of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) contracts and legal representation at mediations and Administrative Hearings for consumers.
2. The Office of the State Comptroller MOU provides approval and processing of expenses for consumers and staff.
3. The Department of DMHAS – provides access to central contracting unit which aids the program for developing and implementing all contracts.
4. State use contracting programs - at the Department level, the agency participates with the Office of the State Comptroller for a Purchase Card program that permits for expedited purchasing of goods and services needed by clients to participate in the rehabilitation process. The Department also has established a fee for service contract model with community rehabilitation providers across the state that enables VR to purchase services at consistent pricing levels, making budget forecasting a more consistent and reliable process. The agency also utilizes state use contracts made available through the Department of Administrative Services for services that have been competitively procured for statewide agency use. Examples include interpreting services, office supplies, cell phones, MiFi, computer hardware, IT consultants and clerical temps off DAS contracts as well.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

BRS continues to collaborate with the State Department of Education (SDE) and a number of entities to implement pre-employment transition services including the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice, the North East Transition Group, Transition Task Force, and CT-AHEAD/Higher Education Schools.

BRS collaborates with education administrators to sign a referral protocol yearly. With implementation of WIOA, 10 VR pre-employment transition service Pre-ETS (Level Up) counselors were assigned to provide Pre-ETS (Level Up) exclusively with students with disabilities.

SDE and BRS have staff that serve on each other's advisory committees (Transition Task Force and Level Up Committee). Program staff attends common training regarding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), secondary transition services and WIOA. SDE and BRS collaborated to develop a statewide CT Transition Community of Practice (COP) with a broad stakeholder base as a single portal for transition resource development, professional development, and interagency collaboration. SDE and BRS initiated statewide strategic planning with agencies, school districts, families and other stakeholders.

Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State Department of Education (SDE) includes the following:

BRS has expanded focus to include both Level Up Committee and Transition Committee to focus on service delivery for students enrolled in high school and also collaborated with the State

Department of Education (SDE) and a number of entities to implement pre–employment transition services including the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice, Transition Task Force, and CT–AHEAD/Higher Education Schools.

1. BRS entered into a MOU with SDE on 11/17/2017 and provides Pre-ETS (Level Up) to students starting at 16 years of age.

1. The responsibilities of BRS under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:
1. Collaborate with the SDE in coordinating, providing, and documenting the provision of Pre-ETS (Level Up) to students with disabilities;
2. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to students and youth who meet the eligibility criteria of BRS;
3. Work with the Local Education Authorities (LEA) to make the best effort to develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) for each student eligible for adult VR services before the student leaves the school setting;
4. Provide consultation and technical assistance to aid LEA in planning for the transition of eligible students;
5. Coordinate with the SDE for training and technical assistance regarding transitioning youth with disabilities and interagency service linkages, including but not limited to, presenting at statewide events and supporting the statewide transition website of the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice (COP);
6. Satisfy the documentation requirements of section 511 of WIOA and 34 C.F.R. 397 for students with disabilities who seek subminimum wage from employers who hold special wage certificates under the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. 214 (c), including the provision of documentation of notice that Pre-ETS (Level Up) were available to that individual under 34 C.F.R. 361.48, documentation of an application for vocational rehabilitation services and the result thereof, and, if the individual was found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, documentation that the individual had an IPE, was unable to achieve the employment outcome specified in the IPE, and had a closed case record meeting the requirements of 34 C.F.R. 361.47;
7. Collaborate with the SDE to provide trainings to schools about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers and Customized Employment for youth with disabilities;
8. Provide a VR staff member to participate on or support the SDE Transition Taskforce, the Connecticut Transition COP; the BRS Level Up meetings, and
9. Satisfy the career counseling and information and referral requirements of WIOA, including its documentation requirements, for each youth with a disability who seeks, or obtains, subminimum wage employment.

The responsibilities of SDE under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:

1. Provide general supervision of the implementation of the IDEA's requirements for special education and related services to ensure a free appropriate public education for children and youth with disabilities;
2. Collaborate with BRS to coordinate, provide, and document the provision of Pre-ETS (Level Up) to students with disabilities;
3. Facilitate partnerships between BRS and LEA, including the identification of a contact person in each organization, as mutually identified by the parties, to facilitate communication;
4. Collaborate with BRS and LEA to develop new Pre-ETS (Level Up) services;
5. Assist BRS with training schools about STEM careers and customized employment for youth with disabilities;
6. Assure that IEPs developed by LEA for youth with disabilities aged 16 or over include plans for the provision of educationally-related "transition services" as defined in 34 C.F.R. 361.22(b)(4) and 34 C.F.R. 300.43. Educationally-related transition services shall also include such activities identified by the LEA as are based on the child's needs, consider the child's preferences, and are designed to facilitate movement from school to post-secondary activities, including employment;

7. For each student with a disability with an IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plan that the LEA has reason to believe may pursue subminimum wage employment following their exit from the school system, SDE shall assure that LEA document the provision of transition services in accordance with the documentation requirements of 34 C.F.R. 397.30(b)(1), including, at a minimum, the child's name, a description of the service or activity completed, the dated signature of the responsible educational official documenting the completion of the required service or activity, and the dated signature of the responsible educational official who transmits the documentation of the provision of transition services to BRS upon the request of BRS;
8. For each student with a disability that the LEA has reason to believe may pursue subminimum wage employment following their exit from the school system, SDE shall assure that LEA transmit documentation of the provision of educationally-related transition services to BRS by June 15 of the year in which the youth exits the school system. Such transmission of documentation to BRS shall include a cover sheet identifying the transmitted documentation that has been provided and shall be made in a manner that ensures confidentiality in accordance with the requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
9. Collaborate with BRS to disseminate information about and train school personnel on how to coordinate services for students with disabilities as they transition to life after high school, including those students interested in supported, subminimum wage, or other employment in compliance with WIOA;
10. Coordinate with BRS to distribute information for LEA to provide to students referred to BRS beginning at age 16;
11. Provide information about BRS and related services on the SDE Secondary Transition and other relevant website pages;
12. Facilitate the provision of transition services through LEA, based on funding responsibilities identified in IDEA and WIOA;
13. Provide an SDE staff member to actively participate on and support or co-chair the BRS Transition Committee, SDE Transition Taskforce and the Connecticut Transition COP; and
14. Assure that neither the SDE nor the LEA will enter into a contract with an entity for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

1. Through an MOU between BRS and the State Department of Education (SDE), BRS consults with SDE by
 - a. Coordinating, providing, and documenting the provision of Pre-ETS (Level Up) to students with disabilities; and
 - b. Coordinating training and technical assistance regarding transitioning students with disabilities and interagency linkages, including, but not limited to, presenting at statewide events and supporting the statewide transition website of the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice (COP).

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

1. The responsibilities of BRS under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:
Assist the LEA in providing transition planning for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individual educational programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the IDEA;

1. The responsibilities of SDE under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:
Coordinate with BRS to provide training and technical assistance regarding the IDEA, transition and Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements for special educators and vocational rehabilitation counselors, including but not limited to presenting at statewide events and supporting the statewide transition website of the Connecticut Transition COP;

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

The responsibilities of BRS and SDE for Financial responsibility and dispute resolution under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:

1. BRS and the SDE agree to maintain independent financial responsibility for the services they are mandated to provide under applicable federal and state laws and regulations;
2. SDE shall ensure that the LEA meet their obligations under the IDEA to provide or pay for transition services that are also considered special education or related services and that are necessary for ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities. BRS will fund Pre-ETS (Level Up) under WIOA; and
3. In the event BRS or an LEA provide or pay for transition services to a youth or students with disabilities and such Party believes that the services should have been provided or paid for by the other Party, that Party shall seek reimbursement from the other Party in writing along with evidence that the services in question were in fact provided, and the legal basis for such claim. In the event the other Party disputes the claim for reimbursement and the Parties cannot resolve the dispute themselves, the agency representatives shall consult with the Office of the Attorney General for a legal opinion or interpretation, if necessary.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

1. The responsibilities of BRS under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:
Assist LEA in providing outreach and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services to be provided by the LEA and Pre-ETS (Level Up) to be provided by BRS;

1. The responsibilities of SDE under the formal interagency agreement are as follows:
Coordinate with BRS in disseminating information to LEA regarding effective, results-based practices for preparing students with disabilities for postsecondary education, vocational training, competitive employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
Cooperative agreements with CRP's, Workforce Development Boards (WBDs) and Independent Living Centers (ILCs) allow for employment supports through the Ticket to Work Partnership Plus program. BRS has with both CRP's and ILC's an MOU in place to determine and ensure distribution of ticket revenue.

Cooperative agreements are established by a negotiation process and are memorialized in Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). WBD's also have an MOU, with an accompanying infrastructure cost agreement in place that was done in collaboration with the all of the WBD's and includes a component for those that are physically co-located with VR.

BRS uses a wide range of contractual agreements with accompanying fee schedules that have been established through a competitive bidding process by the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the designated state agency for the Blind and General VR programs. This provides a statewide comprehensive set of program options and services to choose from. Thirteen nonprofit community-based rehabilitation programs are available through these contractual agreements for clients to select from. The services that are offered through the community rehabilitation programs in the state include trial work experiences, work readiness training, community placement opportunities and job coaching, among other related services. BRS staff members conduct training seminars for staff of the community rehabilitation providers on cross disability subjects, work readiness training and other CRP service provision topics.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Bureau provides supported employment and extended services to consumers with significant disabilities, as appropriate. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors work with each individual consumer to identify necessary services. In the process of developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), the counselor and consumer make decisions about the need for supported employment or extended services. When the services are deemed necessary, the counselor and consumer identify a source of long-term funding and meet with a representative case manager, if appropriate. Once long-term supports are obtained, the plan can be executed. Supported employment and extended services are provided in partnership with our statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's). These arrangements are based on fee-for-service contracts. We use a series of strategies to accomplish the goals of supported or extended employment, including the following:

- The statewide Ongoing Employment Supports Committee is a resource for identifying supported employment funding opportunities on a case by case basis;
- Cooperative agreements with CRPs, American Job Centers and Independent Living Centers (ILCs) allow for additional employment supports through the Ticket to Work Partnership Plus program; and
- The Interagency Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative for staff in BRS, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and CRPs is designed to increase successful employment outcomes to an underserved target population.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

1. VR SERVICES; AND

BRS employs a Business Services Unit, Connect-Ability Staffing Solutions (CASS). CASS Employment Consultants are responsible for employer outreach efforts across Connecticut. The CASS Employment Consultants build relationships with employers to identify their workforce development needs. Through these mutually beneficial relationships, CASS offers business services such as disability awareness trainings, candidate pre-screening, working interviews, on-the-job trainings and industry specific training and placement programs. In turn, the CASS Employment Consultants obtain real-time labor market information that is shared with VR Counselors and participants of the vocational rehabilitation program as part of their career path exploration and decision-making process. This dual-customer approach allows BRS to prepare VR consumers for long-term, sustained employment in a constantly evolving labor market.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

BRS has procured transition services for students with disabilities that include placement with employers to participate in work-based learning experiences and work place readiness training, as defined in WIOA. The scope of services includes social skill development, independent living and instruction in self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and assistive technology. Upon graduation, youth will benefit from transition services to prepare for, seek and maintain employment and secure supports needed to be successful.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

The State Medicaid plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act is a program operated by the Department of Social Services (DSS). For over 20 years until 2014, BRS functioned as a Designated State Unit with DSS serving as its Designated State Agency. As a result of this long-term relationship, BRS has a close working relationship with DSS programs such as TANF, the Medicaid Buy-In, and Money Follows the Person. We offer technical assistance through our Vocational Rehabilitation and Benefits Counseling programs. The Bureau is also in a cooperative agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to ensure that recipients of Medicaid are aware of the services that are available through BRS VR, including the provision of information and referral services.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) MOU enables coordinated vocational employment services for people with intellectual disabilities to minimize overlap of resources.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) MOA enables BRS to partially fund a shared position to improve service delivery and collaboration for consumers of both programs.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

BRS maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this information, the Bureau annually uses a caseload management program and results of ongoing needs assessments to analyze personnel needs.

BRS assisted 6,945 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019. With 59 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:118; the ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:1,158. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:66. Of the 6,945 total annual consumers, 1,682 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Based on the same number of VR counselors, the ratio of staff to all consumers with an IPE is 1:29; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:280; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:16.

Personnel Category Total Positions:

Support (Administrative Assistant, Fiscal, Secretary) 20

Central Office Consultants 9

Regional Directors 3

Managers 3

VR Supervisors 7

VR Counselors 59

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

Personnel Category Current Vacancies and To Be Established Positions:

Support (Administrative Assistant, Fiscal, Secretary) 11

Central Office Consultants 0

District Directors 0

Managers 0

VR Supervisors 3

VR Counselors 5

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Personnel Category Projected Vacancies Over the Next 5 Years

Support (Administrative Assistant, Fiscal, Secretary) 16

Central Office Consultants 1

District Directors 1

Managers 1

VR Supervisors 3

VR Counselors 15

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

We analyze the graduate information from the regional Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) – accredited universities to find schools that offer required courses or graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. We also check with local CACREP schools for the availability of distance learning opportunities for the required CSPD courses. In the state of Connecticut, there is one CACREP–accredited institution of higher education that is preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals: Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). All rehabilitation counseling graduates from this college will be eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam.

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

Currently, there are 94 students enrolled in the CCSU Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

Last year, there were 19 graduates from the CCSU program. This year, the total number of expected graduates is 21. All are eligible to sit for the CRC exam.

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL
BRS sends announcements for Counselor positions to all regional CACREP –accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors. We have initiated contacts with these universities so that we can continue to find well–qualified staff for the vacancies we anticipate in the future. In addition to the Connecticut–based CACREP institution listed above, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants (Assumption and Springfield College in MA, University of Massachusetts, and Salve Regina in RI); we have staff that serve on advisory boards or teach at these institutions. In addition to the above, for recruitment of Managerial or other higher-level administration or specialized positions the Bureau works with the Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) to announce vacancies by dissemination of postings through this organization’s e-mail distribution list.

The Bureau has made efforts to recruit qualified staff representative of the population of Connecticut, experiencing a reasonable amount of success related to frontline counseling staff positions. This is indicated by 53% of the individuals being hired in FFY 2019 being from a minority background. The Bureau does experience persistent and ongoing challenges related to the hiring of Master’s level counselors who are proficient with Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). We will continue and look to enhance the following strategies to ensure there is a sufficient pool of qualified counselors for future openings:

- Increase on–campus college recruitments;
- Increase recruitment and continue online recruitment.
- Increase undergraduate internships.

The Bureau acknowledges an absence of diversity in leadership positions within the agency related to race and ethnicity. At present only 11% of individuals in these positions are from minority backgrounds. This under representation of minorities in such positions is believed to be one of several factors contributing to staff retention issues experienced in recent years. It is important to note that 78% of the attrition that occurred in FFY 2019 involved individuals from minority backgrounds.

Historically in Connecticut, there were several factors that ensured retention of staff. BRS attributed the reasons for retention success as follows:

- BRS recruits staff committed to the importance of VR work;

- In-service training is available to staff at all levels;
- Staff may give input into decisions that affect the way they work; and
- Staff can participate in ongoing committees related to: Regional Training, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Autism Spectrum, the BRS Annual Meeting, and other statewide work groups.

BRS continues to uphold these approaches as critical to staff retention, but as evidenced over recent years our approach must evolve relative to the times. Over FFY 2019 the Bureau made targeted efforts to address issues that were leading to loss of staff and, in addition to the above, believe the following will lead to greater employee retention:

- Ensure that staff have input into the work of the Bureau. The Bureau is encouraging staff at all levels to have representation on committees that offer opportunities for leadership experiences that will help them prepare for other positions in BRS.
- Input to Counselor performance evaluation methodology. The Bureau understands the importance of a fair, valid and reliable approach to evaluating performance within a system now driven by compliance with the WIOA.
- Implementation of improved post-inductive training with clear expectations communicated concerning developmental milestones for new Counselors to surpass over their first year.
- Ensuring connectivity of administrative support staff to the goals, mission and priorities of the program through requiring their attendance at Regional and Statewide staff meetings.
- Continued efforts to identify and address potential for the presence of institutional racial, ethnic or disability-related bias that may exist within the Bureau. To this end, the Bureau is researching and attempting to contract with subject matter experts who could consult on this matter and assist in the remediation of any barriers impeding the hiring or promotion of minorities that may exist.

BRS intends to re-initiate the opportunity for staff to create Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) to identify areas of an employee's current job that need further development, areas that could be developed to prepare for a future job in the agency, and training needed for either. ISDPs encourage staff to pursue areas of their strength and interest. This activity helps to identify staff training needs and prepares staff for growth needed to meet future succession challenges. Along with special emphasis on recruitment for frontline positions, it is hoped that through ISDP's individuals from diverse backgrounds can develop the skills necessary to assume higher level positions within the Bureau.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

The current requirements for CSPD are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC). The National Standard is determined by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). BRS hires counselors that meet CRCC criteria. Even though BRS bases its educational standards for VR Counselors on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC), it does not require counselors to have CRC certification. However, applicants with a CACREP-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree should be able to sit for the CRC exam.

BRS employees interested in CRC Certification are encouraged to contact the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification at the following website:

<http://www.crccertification.com/> for more specific information on their credentials and experience. BRS does not guarantee that the above criteria will entitle a counselor to sit for the CRC exam. The Bureau provides training at no cost, and offers Continuing Education Units (CEU's), which will count toward the ongoing training requirements by CRCC.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

BRS will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors in permanent positions with a Master's in Counseling as described in (a) above. The number of additional required courses will depend on the previous education of the new employee as well as total months of vocational rehabilitation counseling experience. The Bureau's definition of education, course curriculum, and experience is based on current standards for the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification:

- 60 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the Credentialing Committee – no additional courses are required. CSPD requirements are met.
- Individuals with less than 60 months of vocational counseling experience will be required to take up to nine additional courses, based on a review of the graduate transcript. These specific required courses are determined by CRCC as Theories of Counseling, Techniques of Counseling, Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling, Assessment, Occupational Information or Job Placement, Medical Aspects of Disability, Psychosocial Aspects of Disability, Multicultural Issues, and Case Management and Rehabilitation Services.

In addition to education requirements, BRS encourages staff to pursue certification in their field. The Bureau embraces the CSPD process to ensure a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities; continuous organizational development, and, continuous improvement of the competencies of all staff. The Bureau participates and contributes to collaborative conferences and enables staff attendance that focus on the Connecticut labor and education initiatives under W.I.O.A. in order to maintain and increase VR Staff's understanding of current trends and emerging practices related to federal initiatives

BRS also seeks continuous improvements in service delivery, the continuation of a professional level VR staff that can consistently achieve quality employment outcomes as specified in the Rehabilitation Act and promised in the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, we continually seek ways to meet the needs of our consumers and deliver a complete array of services based on the goals of employment, community participation, and informed consumer choice. The Bureau has hired a qualified, diverse, flexible and progressive rehabilitation staff to serve our current and future consumers. BRS strives toward the continuous development of desired consumer outcomes: sustained jobs, jobs with future growth, and jobs with sufficient earnings.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND BRS systematically provides adequate and ongoing training to staff. In-service training addresses assessment, vocational counseling, and job placement. All staff development activities support the Bureau's mission to increase the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. In-service training is available to all staff. The Bureau bases its plan for staff development on a multi-faceted comprehensive needs survey. BRS uses all available information for ongoing analysis of training needs including the following:

- Public Meetings
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;

- Management reports; and
- Manager, District Director, Consultant, and Supervisor feedback.

In addition to ensuring that staff meets CSPD requirements, BRS provides Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training that is mandatory for new staff and available for staff that need refresher training. This includes a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: core BRS policies and practices, trainings on the specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

BRS has identified key areas of competency for new VR Counseling staff during the first year of employment and trainings, supervisory sessions and webinars are provided to help new VR Counselors become proficient in the identified areas.

The Connecticut Tech Act Project Director provides training and consultation for BRS staff.

Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

The 2019 biannual statewide Assistive Technology Conference hosted by the Connecticut Tech Act Project (entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998) specifically offers content and training sessions for vocational rehabilitation counselors and several BRS staff participate in this conference.

The bureau has identified various training needs for staff, therefore BRS made the following trainings and workshops available for staff:

- Accountability
- Institutional racism and Bias Training
- Giving and Receiving feedback
- Supervising and dealing with difficult people
- Supervisors attending: Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor Academy
- University of Arkansas: Currents training for all staff, including trainings for frontline staff and leadership staff
- Conducting statewide all-staff meetings 3 times a year
- Director attending regional staff meetings to discuss concerns and suggestions
- Creation of a Virtual Comment Box to permit staff to offer comments and feedback to the State Director.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

BRS continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where it needs to increase training or vary approaches. Updated information and research is disseminated to all BRS staff by Central Office staff. In addition, shared network drives and folders are utilized for storage and reference of training, policy and procedural information.

BRS also works closely with national technical assistance provided by Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) in order to communicate and disseminate federal regulation and procedural information on current VR practices and policies

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

BRS addresses individual communication needs of applicants for, and recipients of, vocational rehabilitation through the services of others able to communicate in alternate languages, appropriate modes, or in native languages. The Bureau employs staff who are fluent in Spanish, American Sign Language, and other languages. The Bureau is organized into three regions that geographically divide the state. The list below indicates some of the languages fluently spoken/used by current staff and the regions in which they work:

- American Sign Language (ASL): Northern, Southern, Western, and Central Office
- Hindi: North
- Jamaican Patois (English Creole): North

- Malayalam: North
- French: Southern
- Italian: Southern
- Polish: Northern
- Spanish: Northern, Southern, Western, and Central Office

Each region has one (1) or more Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) on staff to work with individuals who are Deaf and fluent in ASL and has access to a videophone. Each region also has one (1) or more Bilingual Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who is fluent in Spanish. The bureau intends to add 4 interpreter clerk positions fluent in Spanish to increase access to VR for the monolingual Spanish population.

BRS employs an Interpreter Coordinator who coordinates all the agency's American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting services, acts as the agency's lead ASL interpreter, supervises one (1) full time agency staff interpreter and one (1) part time agency staff interpreter, and contracts in person and remote ASL interpreter services as necessary. The interpreter coordinator and staff interpreters all have video phone access and can interpret remotely through TEAMS or videophone.

When needed, BRS can hire a spoken language interpreter in almost any language and can access spoken language interpreter services over the phone for all languages. BRS is also in the process of providing training to staff on how to use voice to text translation software available in our new Office 365 for quick translations.

The Bureau does not serve many consumers who use Braille since there is a public Vocational Rehabilitation program through the Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) that serves most consumers who have visual disabilities. When needed, BRS can provide Braille materials for consumers or staff. The Bureau's goal is to provide any communication support necessary for staff or consumers with disabilities.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

BRS collaborates with an Education Consultant at the Connecticut State Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education who has been active in the Department of Education's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council. The Bureau plans training with input from the Consultant. This Consultant provides annual training for all Bureau professional staff on transition and other provisions of the IDEA. This collaboration allows for coordination of the Bureau's human resource plan and personnel development under the IDEA. In addition, the SRC has an active SDE Education Consultant on their council.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

In FFY 2017, BRS, under the advisement of the State Rehabilitation Council, commissioned San Diego State University (SDSU) to conduct a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to examine the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities including their need for supported employment and to assist the Bureau with establishing goals and priorities. BRS continues to use this information as it is preparing for the new needs assessment to be developed in 2020. Relevant excerpts from the CSNA report as issued by SDSU appear below. The CSNA identified the following Barriers to Employment, Barriers to Services and Agency Performance:

Barriers to employment

1. Key informants agreed that barriers to employment are heightened for individuals with most significant disabilities because they have greater needs and often multiple diagnoses, requiring more support in the community, service network and workplace. In

particular, their employment is likely to require long-term workplace supports which are costly or scarce.

2. Forty-four per cent of all BRS applicants receive Social Security benefits, providing a measure of the segment of this population who may settle for working below their full potential because they fear that full time work will jeopardize their benefits.
3. Over 3,500 individuals in Connecticut are earning less than minimum wage. This was attributed to the state's historically high utilization of "group employment" (sheltered workshops) for many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive services from the Department of Developmental Services. Key informants identified this as a barrier to competitive, integrated employment, but acknowledged that measures are under way to begin to limit this option, pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Barriers to services

1. Both the quantitative and qualitative data show that the delivery system's capacity to serve individuals with most significant disabilities is extremely limited. This is especially true where Supported Employment is concerned, and even more so for Customized Employment which is virtually non-existent in Connecticut. There was agreement that the causes include insufficient funding, inconsistent policy and programming across state agencies and limited staff proficiency.
2. These same factors play into BRS' own challenges in serving individuals with the most significant disabilities. Dedicated BRS funding for Supported Employment is in fact limited, as are system resources for long-term supports. A financial literacy pilot program for SSI/SSDI recipients ended in December 2016. BRS has yet to expand customized employment training but is working actively with system partners to improve services for this population going forward, consistent with the WIOA requirements.

Agency Performance

1. The disability types likely to be classified as individuals with the most significant disabilities and require long-term supports (communications, Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities and mental health impairments) represented 80% of BRS consumers in 2016. The disability type comprising the largest proportion served by BRS was mental health impairment, and yet the agency's rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental health impairments was by far lowest of all disability categories.
2. Individuals with most significant disabilities represented 56% of BRS consumers in 2016, a slight decline from 60% in the two previous years. Transition-age youth made up 70% of BRS consumers with most significant disabilities.
3. Eighty-one individuals with most significant disabilities received Supported Employment services from BRS in 2016, down 39% since 2014. It was unclear from data and key informant feedback what types of services were provided to the balance (1,783) of consumers with most significant disabilities. The rehabilitation rate for individuals receiving Supported Employment services declined slightly from 51% to 47%. VR Supported Employment Foundations Training was expanded to two days to increase staff capacity to deliver this service.
4. To comply with WIOA requirements pertaining to individuals earning subminimum wage, BRS and partners are holding regional information fairs. It was too early to measure the outcomes of this strategy, but most observers gave it mixed reviews.
5. Performance data available for this report are not current enough to reflect BRS' recent efforts to address the new WIOA requirements pertaining to Supported or Customized Employment and employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

The 2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment identified the following Barriers and Agency Performance relative to minorities:

Barriers

Key informants were in general agreement that the barriers to both employment and services for individuals who are ethnic and racial minorities are of the same nature as for the general population of individuals with disabilities but are even more challenging, due in part to language and cultural issues. Next most frequently identified as barriers were BRS operational and programmatic issues (slow service delivery, not meeting with consumers in the community, difficulties with or inadequate services) as well as geographic access.

Agency Performance

1. Race/Ethnicity- While close to two-thirds of White and Asian individuals' cases were closed rehabilitated in 2016, Black and Hispanic individuals' cases were lower by 21 and 14 percentage points respectively, which could be an indicator of cultural and language barriers to services for these populations.
2. Overall assessment- Most key informants indicated that the list has not changed significantly in the last ten years, and that despite the state's efforts to serve these populations, their employment outcomes continue to lag behind those of other target groups. They considered BRS' strategies with these populations to be a good effort given the resources at their disposal and the new regulations under WIOA but encouraged the agency to continue to seek creative and collaborative solutions.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The 2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment identified the following Barriers and Agency Performance relative to unserved or underserved individuals with disabilities:

Barriers

Key informants were in general agreement that the barriers to both employment and services for individuals who are from unserved and underserved populations, are of the same nature as for the general population of individuals with disabilities but are even more challenging, due in part to the lack of specialization in the service provider community to address their employment-related needs. Next most frequently identified as barriers were BRS operational and programmatic issues (slow service delivery, not meeting with consumers in the community, difficulties with or inadequate services) as well as geographic access.

Agency Performance

1. Individuals most frequently identified as unserved or underserved by BRS include individuals with psychiatric and developmental/ intellectual disabilities, those with autism spectrum disorder and those transitioning from school to post-secondary education or work. (These groups of individuals are in addition to individuals from minority backgrounds, whom BRS identifies as an underserved population, that are discussed in Section 1. B. above.)
2. Overall assessment- Most key informants indicated that the list has not changed significantly in the last ten years, and that despite the state's efforts to serve these populations, their employment outcomes continue to lag behind those of other target groups. They considered BRS' strategies with these populations to be a good effort given the resources at their disposal and the new regulations under WIOA but encouraged the agency to continue to seek creative and collaborative solutions.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The 2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment identified the following Barriers and Agency Performance relative to the needs of individuals who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system:

Barriers

While there is generally little quantitative data on individuals with disabilities served by AJCs, it is widely acknowledged that AJC utilization and successful results are limited to individuals with disabilities unless staffs are col-located, or programs are jointly sponsored with VR. This

tends to be due to inconsistent policy and programming across state agencies, inadequate staff training and accessibility issues. Quantitative and qualitative data analyzed in this study suggest that Connecticut is no exception. Key informants indicated that where there is co-location, there is better integration and greater likelihood of successful outcomes; otherwise they do not typically find AJCs to be user-friendly for individuals with disabilities who they said feel overwhelmed with paperwork and processes.

Agency Performance

BRS staff participating in interviews indicated that they do make referrals to AJCs, but the agency recorded a total of only 37 referrals from AJCs over the entire three-year period under review, 17 of those occurring in 2016. Twenty-two percent of consumers surveyed indicated that they had tried to access AJCs services. At the systems level, BRS is collaborating in statewide efforts to fulfill the WIOA mandate for an integrated workforce system. In addition to participating in state level planning and implementation, this includes regional and local partnerships, involvement on the state and local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and multiple examples of staff co-location.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

The 2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment identified the following Barriers to Employment, Barriers to Services and Agency Performance relative to the needs of youth with disabilities and students with disabilities:

Barriers to employment

Survey participants ranked lack of job preparedness as the top barrier to employment for youth in transition, followed by challenges with basic needs, including geographic access to jobs. Staff added that lack of family supports is a third factor. These barriers are even more of a challenge for youth than in the general population because so many have never ventured outside the home and school safety net, most have never worked, and schools typically do not expose them to realistic work and life experiences.

Barriers to services

- Staff and partner survey respondents had shared perceptions of the primary barriers to services for youth, ranking difficulty with or inadequacy of BRS programs, and BRS operational issues, as the top two, followed by lack of family supports and low expectations.
- Key informants identified lack of continuity among the 169 school districts, coupled with the changes in design and implementation of BRS' Pre-ETS (Level Up) program, as barriers to service delivery. Observers did find that the strategy had given greater visibility to the need for strong, reality-based transition programming. Respondents all agreed that the dramatic reduction in work-based experiences resulted in a significant negative outcome.

Agency Performance

- Increased efficiencies- BRS significantly increased the number of transition Plans developed (+87%) over the three-year period. This corresponded to a 47% decrease in the average number of days from eligibility to Plan (compared to a 38% decrease agency-wide) and a simultaneous increase in the proportion of agency Plans accounted for by youth cases, from 18% to 25%.
- Outcomes and Expenditures- The increased efficiencies did not translate to improved outcomes or expenditures over this same period. BRS' rehabilitation rate for transition cases decreased from 50% to 42%, with a 32% increase in cost per case. Likewise, the cost for transition cases closed unsuccessfully increased by 35%, in contrast to a 7% agency-wide decrease in that same time.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

The CSNA assessed the need to improve Community Rehabilitation Programs within the state. To complete the CSNA, Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), BRS counselors, consumers and key informants were surveyed. The results indicated that only about 2/3 of respondents felt CRPs meet the employment needs of individuals with disabilities. In 2017 BRS issued a new procurement process, based on recommendations from the previous CSNA, aimed at improving the quality of services through CRPs while decreasing the cost to the Bureau. These new contracts and services began in 2018.

After the procurement process was completed BRS contracted with resultant CRP's statewide. Each CRP stated their certifications and credentials for staff and address the communication barriers. Although the cost savings has been favorable other issues including capacity and capability handling communication barriers has been a challenge.

Since the CRP contracts have been implemented procedural revisions have been on-going with stronger protocol and clearer communication emerging. Continued efforts will be in process with CRP's during 2020.

Training modules are being developed to help with the training and specifics of VR expectations for CRP's. These modules are necessary to CRP's as staff changes frequently and will ensure that all staff working with VR consumers will have the same training and provide the same quality services to our consumers.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

In response to WIOA requirements and input from stakeholders including youth with disabilities, BRS developed and implemented the Level Up program (pre-employment transition services). This includes designated BRS counselors in the high schools, an application the youth can access on their phones, and Pre-ETS (Level Up) developed and provided by both CRPs and BRS staff.

In addition BRS is in the process of implementing a MOA with the State Department of Education (SDE) working with State Education Resource Center (SERC) to add capacity to provide the required Pre-ETS (Level Up) services. The additional capacity will allow BRS to better work with school systems and aid in more seamless communication with Pre-ETS (Level Up) students and their families.

Under the terms of the MOA a resource map will be developed to identify the school supports at each high school, contact information of key personnel, and nature and scope of their transition programming. This information will be utilized to allocate Pre-ETS (Level Up) resources in a manner that augments what each school is already providing.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES
According to the most recent US Census Bureau American Community Survey, Connecticut had 3,541,763 residents who were non-institutionalized in 2017. There were 2,225,763 persons between 18-64 years of age. 8.4% or 186,958 of these individuals had a disability (+/- 0.3 margin of error). Census data from 2017 also shows that Connecticut had 389,368 non-institutionalized persons with disabilities ages 16 and over, and of that number 24.3% were employed. The remaining 75.7% were unemployed.

These statistics reveal that a considerable number of persons with disabilities in the State of Connecticut are not working. A measurable number of these individuals may be transition-aged youth. In addition, a portion of 24.3% of persons with disabilities who are employed may be underemployed. Some of the individuals may also require services to attain or retain employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

These statistics make it difficult to accurately estimate the number of potentially eligible consumers of VR services. That number is many times more than BRS has historically served or has the resources to serve.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) served 4,524 eligible consumers in Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) under general VR funds. This represents a 12.7% decrease from FFY 2018, where BRS served 5,184 consumers.

The number of consumers served represents a measurable and expected decline from FFY 2018. This was in-part due to BRS implementing an Order of Selection on 10/1/18 to address the forecasted \$2M budget shortfall. This marks the first return to an Order of Selection for BRS since FFY 2013 and was determined to be a necessary step in BRS' efforts to contain program costs. Under the Order of Selection, BRS designated that services would be provided to individuals identified as Priority 1 MSD, as well as individuals with disabilities that require vocational rehabilitation services to maintain competitive employment regardless of priority designation. BRS maintained a plan to review fiscal resources and staff capacity on a quarterly basis in the evaluation of the Bureau's ability to remove individuals from the established waiting list. In all, BRS placed 620 of 2,743 applicants (22.6%) on the waiting list during FFY 2019. In three out of four quarters, all consumers on the list at quarter's end were offered an opportunity to receive services. Quarter two was the exception where no individuals were removed due to measurable challenges with staff capacity. Of the 620 individuals placed on the waiting list; 316 were successfully moved into VR services. The remaining 304 were closed from the waiting list or remained on the waiting list at the close of FFY 2019.

Another substantive factor contributing to the Bureau's decline in number of individuals served relates to profound staffing vacancies, particularly at the counselor level. Beginning in FFY 2018 and running into FFY 2019, BRS experienced an unexpected and alarming counselor vacancy rate which peaked at 29%. As noted in the previous State Plan, BRS had already engaged in calculated staffing pattern reductions through attrition as part of a comprehensive effort to contain overall program costs. The sudden and rapid surge in our counselor vacancy rate had a profound impact on the Bureau's ability to move individuals through the VR process. In particular, new applications in FFY 2019 were down 10% as compared to the year prior and down 18% compared to FFY 2017. Throughout FFY 2019 BRS made considerable efforts to recover from this unanticipated loss of staff by hiring more than 14 new counselors to fill vacant counselor positions throughout the State. This was accompanied by a concentrated effort to improve post-inductive training and developmental activities aimed at bringing new staff up to full capacity in an expedited yet qualitative fashion.

Based upon historical data, the elimination of OOS and improvement with staffing levels, the Bureau expects general VR funds. This marks a 15% increase over FFY 2019. The Bureau expects this number to continue trending upward to 5,428 eligible consumers in Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) under general VR funds in FFY 2020. This would represent a 20% increase and brings the Bureau closer to historical norms for service provision.

In addition to the adult VR services forecasted to be provided to individuals under IPE's during FFY 2021, the Bureau forecasts providing Pre-ETS (Level Up) to 1,300 individuals that are either eligible or potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation. This number represents roughly a 10% increase over FFY 2019 and correlates to the increase in the Pre-ETS (Level Up) set aside funding resulting from the Bureau's re-allotment award received in 2019.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

During FFY 2019, BRS purchased services for 38 consumers eligible for Supported Employment funding utilizing \$66,763. This expenditure represents a significant decrease as compared to FFY 2018. This spending decrease is closely related to the overall decreases that were realized with consumers served by the Bureau in FFY 2019. Also contributing to this decrease is the WIOA requirement for reserving 50% of supported employment funding to provide job support services to youth under the age of 25.

Full liquidation of the Supported Employment funds continues to be a challenge for the Bureau given the current requirements for appropriate expenditures under the two grants. Looking forward, the Bureau projects that the increased counselor staffing pattern along with increases in new applications and consumers served will ultimately result in proportionate increases to consumers requiring Supported Employment services. **Thus, the Bureau is forecasting 50**

consumers to be served under Supported Employment in FFY 2021 with an estimated expenditure of \$87,846. In combination with the 5,428 individuals projected to receive services under general VR funds, the total number of individuals who could be served in IPE's for FFY 2021 is 5,478.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

In FFY2021 BRS will not be employing an Order of Selection.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

In FFY2019 BRS has been in an OOS serving only those individuals in Category 1. All eligible individuals in Category 2 and 3, with the exception of individuals employed and in need of specific services or equipment to maintain employment, are placed on a waiting list.

BRS has maintained since 10/01/2018 a fluid waiting list, which is reviewed quarterly. BRS will review the list for the 6th time at the end of this quarter 12/31/19. Fluctuation of program income led to an initial review of the list 11/30/18 prior to end of 1st quarter. At that time all individuals on the waiting list were offered services. The waiting list has since been reviewed again 12/31/18, 03/30/2019, 06/30/19 and 09/30/19. In each review all individuals have been offered the opportunity to engage in services except those on the waiting list as of 03/30/19. Second quarter the list remained closed. Applicants placed on the waiting list between 01/01/19 and 03/30/19 were not offered an opportunity to receive services and remained on the waiting list until the next review 06/30/2019.

Since implementation, 620 individuals, an average of 155 eligible individuals in categories 2 and 3 have been placed on the waiting list each quarter. Of those 620, 316 (50.9%) have been served following an average 89.52 days on the waiting list.

BRS will stay in an OOS through 06/30/20, at which time barring no substantial changes to program income or staffing, it is anticipated that the Bureau will reopen all Categories and serve all eligible applicants. BRS will go out of an Order of Selection July 1, 2020. There will be no waiting list.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

Total VR program purchase of services (POS) costs for all consumers in FFY 2019 was \$8M.

This figure represents a \$400,000 decrease as compared to FFY 2018 expenditures and a \$4.8M decrease when compared to FFY 2017. During FFY 2018, when faced with budget projections that were anticipated to yield significant shortfalls by FFY 2020, internal controls were put in place to influence overall costs of POS. As a result of these controls, coupled with a reduction in consumer base realized through the implementation of OOS, the Bureau realized this \$5.2M decrease in spending related to services purchased over this two-year period.

For FFY 2020 the Bureau projects a POS expenditure of \$8.5M in general VR services, with an additional expenditure of \$2.5M in Pre-Employment Transition POS for a total cost of services of \$11M. This increase in POS costs is considered possible through an anticipated increase in clients served as a result of removal of OOS, an expansion of capacity of the Bureau's Pre-ETS (Level Up) program services and outreach efforts to presently underserved populations. From a funding perspective, the above is made possible due the results of previous cost containment efforts and a \$6M federal re-allocation award that was received in FFY2019.

With respect to the number of consumers projected to receive services during FFY 2021, the Bureau forecasts an expenditure of \$10M in POS for VR services, with \$2.5M allocated to the purchase of Pre-Employment Transition Services. As stated above, full utilization of available Supported Employment funding during the FFY 2021 is expected to be challenging, with projected expenditure being approximately \$87,800.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be served	Average Cost of Services
OOS Priority Category 1	Title I	\$6,800,000	3,691	\$1,843
OOS Priority Category 1	Title I	\$2,600,000	1,411	\$1,843
OOS Priority Category 3	Title I	\$600,000	326	\$1,843
Pre-Employment Transition Services	Title I	\$2,500,000	1,300	\$1,923
Supported Employment	Title VI	\$87,846	50	\$1,757
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Totals		\$12,490,346	6,340	\$1,970

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR Agency and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

The Bureau, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and identified four major goal areas. The goals and priorities listed in section L.2. below are derived from this assessment and will be used to carry out the Supported Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. The next CSNA will take place in 2020 and new goals and priorities will be based on the results of that assessment.

In addition to the CSNA BRS has identified other priorities, based on SRC, staff and consumer input on which it has acted. These include improving services to consumers who speak Spanish, streamlining all aspects of the field staff work to increase capacity and improve overall quality of services, and developing a customized employment model in partnership with three other state agencies (Departments of Labor, Developmental Services, and Education).

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The Bureau, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), identified four major goal areas. These goals and priorities will be used to carry out the Supported Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

Each of the goal areas contains a set of priority areas that the Bureau could address in the coming year. We cannot address every issue identified as a need but attempted to build goals broad enough to address the major themes. Four priority areas were chosen based on their frequency of occurrence in the assessment. One additional goal was developed to address implementation of WIOA.

Goal 1: To implement the provisions of WIOA specific to the VR program.

Priority areas:

- Pre-employment transition services

- Employer services
- Service delivery
- Performance accountability measures
- Customized Employment
- Subminimum wage

Goal 2: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- Customer service and provision of information
- Ongoing skill development
- Use of social media
- Provision of information on resources, labor market information and training/education programs

Goal 3: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

Priority areas:

- Individuals from minority backgrounds
- Young adults with disabilities
- Individuals with psychiatric disabilities
- Individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

Goal 4: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- Services for individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish
- Cultural competencies for staff

Goal 5: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- Businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)
- State Agencies with a specific emphasis on core WIOA partners

These broad goals are intended to be five-year goals, with the priority areas being flexible enough to change from year to year if necessary.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

The Bureau, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and identified four major goal areas. The goals and priorities listed in section L.2. above are derived from this assessment and will be used to carry out the Supported Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. BRS and the SRC are jointly in process of developing a new needs assessment that will identify statewide barriers. The next CSNA will take place in 2020 and new goals and priorities will be based on the results of that assessment.

In addition to the CSNA BRS has identified other priorities, based on SRC, staff and consumer input on which it has acted. These include improving services to consumers who speak Spanish, streamlining all aspects of the field staff work to increase capacity and improve overall quality of services, and developing a customized employment model in partnership with three other state agencies (Departments of Labor, Developmental Services, and Education).

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

The Department continues early assessments of performance accountability data collected under section 116 of WIOA. The Department is also working on matching data in our system to

the RSA quarterly dashboards for the purposes of better understanding and controlling performance measures. BRS expects to begin the process of establishing expected levels of performance with RSA in PY 2020 and 2021.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

BRS continues provide the SRC with financial reports and overall production reports related to performance and accountability measures from each region in the state. Additional reporting includes the number of new applicants, eligibilities, rehabilitation outcomes as a comparison of the current year versus the previous year. In addition the state director provides updates on the VR program at every meeting and the SRC is encouraged to ask questions and request additional information as needed. The SRC also invites a program VR staff member and/or VR counselor to attend each SRC meeting and discuss programmatic updates and information sharing session. BRS elicits the input from the SRC related to areas of programmatic weakness or where development is needed. The SRC remains active and providing input as programmatic goals are identified and pursued. The SRC is informed on all major activities of BRS and are encouraged to partner.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

Whether in an Order of Selection or not, The Bureau has assigned all applicants to an OOS category as a means of determining the distribution of the programs' collective caseload across priority categories of disabilities. The priority categories assigned are based on level of significance of disability. "Level of significance of disability" means one of the following: Priority Category 1, "Most Significant Disability"; Priority Category 2, "Significant Disability"; or Priority Category 3, "disabled" as set forth below. Individuals with disabilities shall be served first, based on significance of disability and second, by date of eligibility in the following priority order:

1. **Priority Category 1:** "Most Significant Disability" means an eligible individual who meets the following criteria:
 - a. Meets criteria for "Significant Disability" as defined below; and
 - b. A severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits four or more functional capacity areas in terms of an employment outcome. Functional capacity areas are: mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, self-direction, or work skills;
2. **Priority Category 2:** "Significant Disability" means an eligible individual who meets the following criteria:
 - a. A severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacity areas in terms of an employment outcome. Functional capacity areas are: mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, self-direction, or work skills;
 - b. Vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services;
 - c. Vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require services over an extended period of time; and
 - d. An individual who has one or more physical or mental disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility, and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause substantial functional limitation.
3. **Priority Category 3:** "individual with a disability" means an eligible individual.

Eligible individuals, who do not meet the Order of Selection category currently being served, will have access to services through information and referral. Individuals will be appropriately referred to other programs, including those of other core WIOA partners.

After determining eligibility, counselors must assign a priority category and follow the Order of Selection set forth above for the provision of services. Individuals determined eligible, and with an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to the date of implementation of the Order of Selection will continue to receive services. The Bureau will notify all eligible individuals of the priority categories in the Order of Selection. Eligible individuals in priority categories not being served will be notified in writing of their assignment to a particular category and advised of their right to appeal their category assignment.

If services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals who apply, the Director of BRS will implement an Order of Selection (OOS) as set forth in this Section.

Based upon financial and staffing capacity projections BRS intends to remove the current Order of Selection effective upon implementation of this plan on July 1, 2020. Eligible applicants in all Priority categories will be served.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

BRS will no longer be in an Order of Selection, effective July 1, 2020.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

BRS intends to remove the current Order of Selection effective July 1, 2020. After that date, BRS plans to initiate new IPE's and serve all eligible clients across all categories of priority status. The projected overall numbers of clients to be served under an IPE in FFY 2021 is 5,428. The proposed case service budget is \$10,000,000. The expected service provision by priority category is as follows:

OOS Category 1: 68% or \$6,800,000

OOS Category 2: 26% or \$2,600,000

OOS Category 3: 6% or \$600,000

Based upon existing consumer base, removal of Order of Selection and staffing capacity CT BRS projects employment closures as follows:

OOS Category 1: 68% or 887

OOS Category 2: 26% or 339

OOS Category 3: 6% or 78

Total Projected Successful Outcomes: 1,304

The distribution of service and outcome levels across OOS categories is expected to trend toward a higher percentage of Category 2 and 3 clients in 2022. This is based on the expectation that immediate access to services for all eligible consumers after July 1, 2020 will diminish the number of potentially successfully consumers that do no access BRS.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

Effective July 1, 2020, all eligible applicants in all OOS Categories will be offered the opportunity to develop an Individualized Plan of Employment and receive vocational rehabilitation services.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

When in an Order of Selection, eligible individuals who have most significant disabilities will be offered the opportunity to develop an IPE and receive vocational rehabilitation services first (see VR Portion, Section M. 1 A). BRS will assess its financial and personnel resource capacity quarterly and will open the order to serve numbers of individuals with Significant Disabilities and individuals with disabilities for which sufficient funds are projected to be available.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Yes, the Bureau has elected to serve individuals regardless of any established Order of Selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
If Supported Employment funding is exhausted future obligations for ongoing supports for this population will be encumbered against General VR funds from that point forward.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

1. The funds will be utilized in accordance with federal regulations and limited to on the job supports for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
2. Supported Employment funding will be used for extended services for youth until it is exhausted.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

Extended Services

1. Services can be provided for a period up to, but not to exceed four years to youth or until a youth turns 25 with the most significant disabilities expending Supported Employment funds.

Prior to WIOA, funding for these services were not permitted for youth with disabilities.

Transition to Extended Services

All Bureau services are authorized and provided based on the individual needs of the consumer. BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Supported Employment funding to the identified provider of the extended services as soon as the funding is available, and transition is appropriate.

Coordination and Collaboration

BRS oversees one of the three state-funded extended services programs. The Bureau is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The Bureau works with relevant State Agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Supported Employment funding to an appropriate extended services program. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BRS will use the following objectives to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

1. Work with WIOA core partners to ensure that individuals with disabilities are effectively supported in the newly designed state employment system.
2. Continue to evolve its strategic plan for delivering Pre-Employment Transition Services by entering into a MOA with the State Department of Education (SDE) to facilitate the coordination and provision of transition services for students with disabilities.
3. Focus on timely progress through each step of the case management process.
4. Continue to maintain dedicated staff resources to manage the BRS training program and maintain a separate line item within the Bureau's budget to offer necessary training.
5. Continue to use social media to connect job seekers with opportunities to pursue jobs with employers.
6. Develop materials on resources, labor market information and training/education programs for distribution to consumers.
7. Continue to dedicate a specific unit of VR staff to support employers as dual customers to create more business partnerships and more employment opportunities through direct job placement, the use of On-The-Job (OJT) Trainings and Industry Specific Training Program (ISTPs).

8. Participate in cross agency trainings through the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to strengthen state agency partnerships.
9. Continue to develop and disseminate Distance Learning Modules for staff, CRP's and consumer use.
10. Continue to develop Customized Employment Services to improve employment outcomes.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

BRS makes Assistive Technology (AT) available to individuals with disabilities through collaboration with the Connecticut Tech Act Project (Connecticut's statewide assistive technology program) throughout the rehabilitation process across the state in the following ways:

1. VR counselors may solicit the Bureau's Assistive Technology Consultant for guidance and assistance to ensure that AT devices and services are considered throughout the consumer's vocational rehabilitation process as appropriate.
 2. The AT consultant can conduct and/or facilitate comprehensive AT evaluations with consumers and can provide training in the use of newly-acquired AT, as needed.
 3. Through the Assistive Technology Device Loan Program at BRS, and network of CT Tech Act Project partners, VR consumers and employers may borrow and try out devices to help them make informed decisions as to whether the AT device is appropriate and if it will remove or reduce barriers, as expected. The inventory for this program includes a wide range of devices across the AT continuum from low to high tech, across disability categories (i.e.: hearing, vision, mobility, computer access, cognitive, communication, etc.), and across potential work environments.
 4. VR Counselors and the AT Consultant collaborate with other entities such as school systems, colleges/universities, employers, independent living centers, state Medicaid waiver programs, and health insurance plans to facilitate the provision of AT devices and services via comparable benefits.
 5. The AT consultant issues an electronic newsletter, maintains a website and utilizes social media to provide information about AT trends for anyone interested in AT.
 6. The Connecticut Tech Act Project hosts a bi-annual full day Assistive Technology Conference with a focus on AT for employment, community living and education. There are generally 12 to 15 sessions, up to 30 exhibitors and approximately 200 – 300 participants.
- ## 3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

BRS has targeted several ways to better serve minority and unserved/underserved consumers. In addition to the procedures listed below BRS has decided to add additional staff resources to serve these populations in 2020.

1.
 - a. Employ at least one (1) Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) and one (1) Bilingual Counselor (Spanish) per region dedicated to working with the monolingual ASL and Spanish consumers.
 - b. Work with the Bureau's Central Office Latino Consultant and Latino Committee to develop effective approaches to working with consumers who are monolingual Spanish speaking. Members of the Latino Committee and the Employment Consultants will continue to consult with each other and outreach to employers on improving employment outcomes to those who communicate in Spanish.
 - c. Work with the Bureau's State Coordinator for the Deaf (SCD) and Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) to develop effective approaches to working with

Deaf consumers whose primary language is American Sign Language. Members of the RCD Committee and the Employment Consultants will continue to consult with each other and outreach to employers on improving employment outcomes to those who communicate in ASL.

- d. Work with both the Latino Counselors and RCDs to ensure all preemployment transition services are accessible to consumers whose primary language is Spanish or ASL
- e. Continue to translate all new publications and required forms into Spanish
- f. Continue to translate distance learning modules into Spanish and American Sign Language.
- g. Continue to partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for individuals with psychiatric disabilities
- h. Continue to hold monthly Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee to develop more employment resources for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.
- i. Provide ongoing opportunities to strengthen cultural competencies for staff.
- j. The next statewide comprehensive needs assessment will include special emphasis on identifying and outreaching to monolingual Spanish populations across the state.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

BRS uses the following methods to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities:

1. Align existing VR services with Pre-Employment Transition Services as defined in WIOA 2014.
2. Serve students with disabilities ages 16–21 enrolled in high school by providing pre-employment transition services from existing community rehabilitation providers, companies, community agencies, education entities, colleges and universities statewide.
3. Assign 11 vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors to school systems statewide to serve students enrolled in high school.
4. Improve partnerships with school systems by providing transition services to students.
5. Strengthen partnerships with State Department of Education, local school systems, community providers, higher education entities, other state agencies, and employers.
6. Create and disseminate effective marketing and messaging to target school systems, students and their families, to educate and inform them about the BRS shift in service delivery to students as outlined in WIOA regulations.
7. Continue to strengthen and broaden collaboration resources with employers, two- and four-year colleges and universities, WDBs/American Job Centers and DOL grant training programs for students, youth, and young adults with disabilities.
8. Partner with SDE to increase capacity to work with VR counselors in supporting students enrolled in high school.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

BRS will develop the capacity of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to meet the needs of VR consumers in the following ways:

1. Continue to conduct annual performance reviews on all CRPs to ensure quality service delivery.
2. Develop and implement service models designed to provide flexibility to CRP's in developing job sites and in providing services specific to client needs.

3. Meet quarterly with CRPs in each district.
4. Provide opportunities for CRPs to meet statewide, both in targeted committee meetings and at an annual forum.
5. Participate in the Job Development Leadership Network.
6. Continue to disseminate Distance Learning Modules focused on service delivery and fiscal process for CRPs to interact with BRS.
7. Implement minimum training requirements for frontline CRP staff.
8. Increase the number of providers who will serve underserved populations, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Monolingual Spanish.
9. Explore procurement opportunities for specialized services.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

BRS will continue work with the larger workforce development system to set thresholds for the new WIOA performance accountability measures.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BRS VR staff's expertise on disability related topics, including how adaptive technology can be utilized to make core services of the American Job Centers and training programs accessible is offered to the partner programs. The BRS VR counselors offer recommendations on how to make information and training materials accessible to job seekers who have disabilities. Additionally, BRS VR counselors provide in-service training to staff of partner programs on effective approaches to utilize when working with and assisting individuals who have disabilities. BRS VR staff are an active and ongoing resource to partner program staff in this area.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The strategies mentioned above align with the Bureau's goals and will be employed to address barriers to employment and services, as well as to improve general Bureau performance relative to equitable access to VR services.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

BRS anticipates using innovation and expansion (I&E) funds in FFY 2021 to support the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council. There is also the potential to pilot a project with the Connecticut State College System to create a training program for consumers of the Bureau to learn how to create and remediate accessible documents and educational materials and work at one of the state or community colleges. Other proposals will be assessed upon submission and considered based on the alignment with the State's goals and priorities.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

The strategies mentioned above align with the Bureau's goals and barriers identified in the CSNA surrounding barriers to equitable access to VR services. Equal access to services will remain a consideration in the employment of all strategies contained within the plan.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Goal 1: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

1. Customer Service and Provision of Information

1. Both the BRS and Connect–Ability websites provide information related to VR services that are updated, as needed. State of Connecticut implemented a new portal platform during PY2019.
2. Response to Consumer Requests – During PY2018, BRS responded to over 650 inquiries for information through the BRS e-mail submissions.
1. Ongoing Skill Development we have identified two major goals:
1. **Goal I:** To improve the skills of all BRS staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, Bureau mission and programs, awareness of state and community resources.

BRS provides Foundations of CT VR, a year–long series of in–service training mandatory for new staff and available to staff for refresher training. This includes a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: Foundations of CT VR Training, trainings on specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

The Bureau developed an integrated program of training, education, and development activities for staff to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. BRS also maintains dedicated staff resources to manage the Bureau’s training program and will maintain a separate training line within the Bureau’s budget that equals the level of funds available under WIOA.

1. **Goal II:** To improve recruitment and retention of BRS staff by providing career development and succession planning activities to assist counselors in defining appropriate career paths and to assist the Bureau to maximize its resources, while continuing to meet CSPD requirements.
1. Social Media –Job seekers, employers, advocates and providers use social media to communicate and network. In order to keep pace with technological advancements, BRS added the use of social media as a form of communication to help consumers gain access and become familiar with online job information. BRS formed a Social Media Committee that continues to meet regularly to oversee the Bureau’s social media activities. The committee developed Social Media Policy and Guidance that was the basis for staff training. BRS has a presence on Facebook, while the larger Department has a LinkedIn and Twitter account. Staff are encouraged to have a presence on these platforms for work–related activity only. Staff may assist consumers in developing a presence on these platforms to access information from BRS and employment information and opportunities. Consumers may be referred to the Department of Labor for LinkedIn training as well.

Goal 2: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

Priority areas:

1.
 - a. Individuals from minority backgrounds

In an effort to improve and increase contracted employment services for monolingual Spanish and Deaf consumers who use American Sign Language (ASL), BRS procured employment services through Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) with an emphasis on providing services to these populations using “Communication Mitigation Services”. BRS began these new employment services in October 2018. Under this new contract, several CRPs in each catchment area are required to have staff fluent in American Sign Language and Spanish who can provide two new services created specific to these populations: Communication Assessment Services and Communication Support Services in addition to all the mainstream CRP employment services. CRPs who do not have staff fluent in ASL or Spanish are to provide the mainstream CRP employment services with assistance of a third-party Interpreter or Staff Interpreter.

In efforts to increase employment outcomes for youths who are deaf, BRS supports three (3) Pre-ETS (Level Up) services during the summer months: Explore Your Future (EYF) at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Discover Your Future (DYF) at Gallaudet University, and allow students to attend the National Association for the Deaf's 54th Biennial Conference either as a participant or a volunteer.

BRS has also created a "Work Readiness Training Program" (WRTP), which is a series of four (4) modules covering preemployment, job development, informational interviewing, and job shadowing. BRS is in the process of finalizing not only the translation of the agency's four (4) WRTP modules into both ASL and Spanish, but also providing the modules with ASL and Spanish related employment references as well.

Training: BRS provided the following training opportunities in efforts to improve employment outcomes for unserved or underserved populations:

- Exploring Bias and Institutional Racism
- CURRENTS Leadership and Supervisor Training
- Achievement Through Technology Conference
- APSE Employment First Conference
- 27th Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities- had employment related workshops for individuals on the Spectrum, with executive functioning deficits, and with mental health impairments.
- Deaf Culture Training- provided to all BRS staff and American Job Center Partners
- Deaf Job Seeker Workshop- provided to our Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)
- Community Rehabilitation Provider Communication Barrier Mitigation Training
- National Association for the Deaf's 54th Biennial Conference (numerous workshops related to employment)
- Disclosure and Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace for Persons with Mental Health Conditions
- EPIC Assessment tool training (pictorial assessment tool accessible to all consumers)
- Kenexa Prove It Assessment training (Assessments are available in Spanish)
- World of Work Inventory (WOWI) training (Assessments available at different English reading and writing levels)

As a result of these efforts, BRS assisted 261 Individuals from minority backgrounds achieve successful employment outcomes in PY 2018.

1.

a. Young Adults with Disabilities

BRS has met quarterly with SDE and representatives from the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to continue providing current transition information. This group now includes the Department of Developmental Services Education Liaisons and Transition Consultants. BRS has met quarterly with SDE and representatives from RESCs, Department of Developmental Services Education Liaisons and Transition Consultants, now called the CT Transition Alliance, to continue providing current transition information. BRS, SDE and the CT Community of Practice (CT COP) maintain partnership with the IDEA National Transition Community of Practice. This partnership led to the creation of a state stakeholder run website called CTTransition.Org. The CT COP represents a core team of stakeholders and initial practice groups that include the BRS Transition & Level Up committees and the Transition Task Force. The CT COP continues to uphold the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) Guideposts for Success as a framework for secondary transition activities and information. This is the same framework BRS has used for Transition since 2010.

As a result of these efforts, BRS assisted 182 Young Adults with Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes in PY 2018.

1.

a. Individuals with Psychiatric Disability

BRS continues to partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the State Mental Health agency to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for individuals

with psychiatric disabilities. As a result of these efforts, BRS assisted 321 Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes in PY 2018.

1.

a. Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

BRS held 10 meetings of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee in order to develop more responsive services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. BRS sponsored a training by a nationally recognized expert on adults on the autism spectrum for both VR and CRP staff. As a result of these efforts, BRS assisted 128 Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders achieve successful employment outcomes in PY 2018.

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

1. Services for Individuals who are Deaf

BRS employs one (1) State Coordinator for the Deaf and three (3) full-time and one (1) part-time Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf. BRS also hired an Interpreter Coordinator who in addition to coordinating the agency's American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting needs, also supervises one (1) full time staff interpreter and one (1) part time staff interpreter. The agency is currently hiring to fill one (1) additional part time staff interpreter as well.

BRS has translated five (5) of fourteen (14) distance-learning modules into American Sign Language (ASL) and is in the process of translating the agency's four (4) Work Readiness Training Program Modules in American Sign Language.

1. Services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish

BRS employs one (1) Central Office Latino Consultant and six (6) full time Bilingual (Spanish) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors at the time of writing this, one (1) position is currently being refilled. BRS is also in the process of hiring several clerk typist interpreters who are fluent in Spanish to assist the agency.

BRS has translated five (5) of fourteen (14) distance learning modules into Spanish and is in the process of translating the agency's four (4) Work Readiness Training Program Modules into Spanish.

1. Cultural Competencies for Staff

BRS is committed to assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment outcomes. Efforts have been initiated and specialized training has been offered on how to work with underserved target groups (mental health impairment, substance abuse, learning disabilities, Deafness, Autism Spectrum) has been provided, or is scheduled to be provided. Trainings are comprised of both in-person and online modules.

Goal 4: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

1.

a. Businesses

In PY 2018, BRS negotiated 98 OJT opportunities, 106 Competitive Work Opportunities (CPO), and 38 Direct Placements. BRS also contracted with the following Industry-Specific Training Programs (ISTPs):

- Southeastern Employment Services/Lowes Distribution Center
- Viability/Mohegan Sun
- Viability/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Viability/Travelers
- Viability/Walgreens Distribution Center
- Viability/Advance Auto Distribution Center
- Ability Beyond/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Ability Beyond/Wyndham
- Ability Beyond/Planet Fitness

From these ISTP partnerships, 117 individuals participated in training; 65 individuals were hired permanently upon successful completion of the training.

In addition, plans are being finalized to begin the following Industry Specific Training Programs (ISTPs):

- Ability Beyond/Maplewood Senior Living
- Ability Beyond/CVS Pharmacy
- Ability Beyond/Ethan Allen Inn
- Viability/Travelers
- Viability/Pratt & Whitney
 - Community Rehabilitation Providers

BRS is in the process of developing Distance Learning Modules for CRP staff. The Bureau has completed the CRP Fiscal Module and aims to complete the CRP Overview, Trial Work Experience, Work Readiness Training Program, and Work Attachment Modules in 2020. Other modules that will be developed are the Job Coaching Services module, Communication Barrier Mitigation Services module, CRP Executive Director module, and the CRP Overview Module translated into both Spanish and American Sign Language.

As part of the Annual Review Process, each CRP agency reports to BRS on the staff that have taken the Distance Learning Modules as well as staff who have participated in one of three BRS CRP trainings that are offered throughout the year.

1.

a. State Agencies

BRS has collaborated with the WIOA core partners and other relevant state agencies to unify the job services available for consumers seeking employment opportunities.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Our recent procurement for CRP services was completed with services initiating just before the start of FFY 2019. These services incorporated Communication Barrier Mitigation Services which by design were intended to better serve individuals from minority backgrounds (Deaf or Spanish speaking monolingual individuals). When this contract went live, many CRPs had qualified direct service staff to provide these services. Throughout the year however, our CRPs experienced significant attrition with their qualified direct service staff and this left the Department with limitations for service provision to these populations. The Bureau did not identify additional factors that impeded achievement of goals and priorities.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS
Supported Employment (SE) goals were achieved using the following strategies:

1. VR Supported Employment Foundations Training is provided to new VR Counselors. Senior VR counselors are also invited to the training to get a refresher on the current SE environment as well as provide technical assistance during the training.
2. In addition, a BRS and DMHAS protocol document remains in place for both agencies to provide technical assistance on Supported Employment Policy and Procedures. Both agencies participate in a combined training for VR staff, mental health staff, CRP staff on an ongoing basis.
3. Collaborative meetings are held semiannually with partners.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Impeding Factors for Achieving Goals and Priorities

1. Consistent policies and practices in and between agencies administering Supported Employment programs continue to be a challenge for all stakeholders, including providers.
2. Staff turnover is frequent and coordinating collaborative trainings and providing technical assistance is difficult. While this has been a challenging effort, training is still a priority for VR and partner agencies and providers.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

BRS continues the process of analyzing data related to performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. BRS reviews RSA's quarterly dashboards and we are working to adapt our systems for reporting to match the data within these dashboards. BRS anticipates working with RSA during PY 2020 and 2021 to negotiate expected levels of performance within each of the indicators.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) received funding to support efforts to assist BRS in assessing programs and services provided to vocational rehabilitation consumers. The SRC incurs travel expenses to in-state meetings and sign-language interpreters, when needed. When desired by the Council, I & E funds are utilized to send an SRC delegate to attend out-of-state conferences for the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). BRS has supported the SRC's effort to develop and print informational materials concerning the VR program for distribution to employers and other stakeholders. Funding was provided during 2019 for this endeavor and the materials have been produced.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

Supported Employment services

- SE services timeframe up to 24 months; under special circumstances if jointly agreed to by the individual and vocational rehabilitation counselor, the timeframe can exceed the 24 months.

Extended Services:

1. Services can be provided for a period up to, but not to exceed 4 years to youth under the age of 25 with the most significant disabilities expending supported employment funds; and
2. As the need for SE is established and funding identified for extended services, VR plans can be amended to Supported Employment Plans.
3. Utilization of short-term plans as a means towards assuring better opportunities for transitioning youth who are expected to be in our system for longer periods of time.

For transition to Extended Services, BRS will work with relevant State Agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Supported Employment funding to the identified provider of the extended services funding as soon as the funding is available, and transition is appropriate. The timeframe of Supported Employment funding will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

Coordination and Collaboration

BRS is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how Supported Employment services are delivered in the community. The Bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from Supported Employment funding to an appropriate extended services program. The Bureau oversees one of the three state-funded extended services programs and spent approximately \$255,500 in serving VR consumers after VR services were completed. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

(REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI
OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];
ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS
APPROPRIATE

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE
REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF
DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR
SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR
COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE
REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF
EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT
ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;
ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE
REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE
AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES
PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND
ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY
FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION
OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE
PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE
AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING
THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS
SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF
THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE
PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY
UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE
UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS
SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

David F. Doukas

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY
TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND
THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;
ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

VR General Director

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED
STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED
THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	David F. Doukas
Title of Signatory	VR General Director
Date Signed	February 28, 2020

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewide and waivers of statewide requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewide for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation	

The State Plan must include	Include
Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	No
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for	

The State Plan must include	Include
individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	29.0	37.0	32.0	42.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND)

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

BESB VR Response: The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (BESB VR) at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) continues to be a valuable and active contributing partner to the BESB VR Program and the organization as a whole. Over the course of the past fiscal year, the SRC members have participated in many activities on behalf of BESB VR, as well as continuing their existing responsibilities as identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The following information summarizes the recommendations and initiatives of the SRC and incorporates BESB VR's response to each item.

SRC Recommendation 1: Have the Consumer Satisfaction Survey conducted by an entity experienced in performing consumer-based surveys and statistically analyzing outcome data.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with this recommendation. The SRC commissioned the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to conduct a Consumer Satisfaction Survey of BESB VR service recipients for fiscal year (FY) 2019. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the levels of satisfaction with the services that clients received from BESB VR. The complete survey report is posted in the BESB VR section of the agency website (<https://portal.ct.gov/aginganddisability>).

From the results of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, CPPSR found that 93% of respondents would recommend BESB VR services to a friend. On a ten-point rating scale, in comparison to the prior year's survey findings, satisfaction levels increased in the extent to which clients felt that BESB services met their needs (8.12, up 0.82), overall satisfaction with services (8.22, up 0.67), the extent to which clients felt services met their IPE's employment goal (8.27, up 0.64), and the extent to which BESB services met clients' expectations (8.08, up 0.58).

In FY 2019, increases in counselor satisfaction ratings occurred in their ability to help clients identify career goals (8.78, up 1.92), counselor professionalism (9.19, up 1.32), counselors' recognition of clients' special employment needs (8.65, up 1.12), counselors' ability to help clients develop an IPE (8.46, up 1.05), counselors' understanding of clients' vocational rehabilitation rights (7.88, up 0.91), and counselor knowledge (8.33, up 0.64). In comparison to the FY 2018 results, three services showed an increase in mean satisfaction ratings in FY 2019. Skills Training Services had the largest increase in client satisfaction (9.25, up 1.5), followed by Reader Services (10.0, up 1.29), and Higher Education Training (8.0, up 0.57).

SRC Recommendation 2: Based on the results of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, implement strategies for improving on the delivery of services for clients of the Program.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with this recommendation. Based upon the results of the FY 2018 Consumer Satisfaction Survey, the SRC recommended that the survey be done much sooner after an individual has completed services, rather than conducting the survey only once per year. It was felt that conducting the survey more often would increase the rate of participation and also afford clients the opportunity to offer responses for services that were more recently completed. This approach was also seen as a way to enable BESB VR to respond to any concerns as they were emerging throughout the year rather than waiting until the completion of the entire fiscal year to learn of trends in satisfaction levels. Effective with the FY 2020 survey, this new methodology will be utilized.

The SRC also recommended that the survey instrument should be updated to align the questions more closely with the priorities identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and to explore if the survey could be administered using newer survey technologies rather than relying on a telephone survey approach, with a goal of increasing the level of participation in the survey. A workgroup of the SRC was formed in FY 2019 to review the survey instrument with a plan for recommending potential changes in the questions and formatting of the survey for the full SRC's consideration during FY 2020.

The SRC further concluded that some of the responses provided by the FY 2018 survey participants suggested a lack of clarity with the Vocational Rehabilitation policies. It was recommended that the Client Services Handbook be updated to address this. This recommendation was implemented in FY 2019 and the updated handbook is available on the agency website in the BESB VR section. It is also provided to every client at the time of eligibility determination.

The SRC also recommended that strategies be utilized for ensuring adequate caseload coverage when vacancies occur, such as seeking approval for a retiree to cover a caseload temporarily and seeking existing staff who are available to work additional hours to help maintain caseload coverage until vacant positions are filled. BESB VR agreed with these recommendations as well and would plan to seek such approvals when BESB VR Counselor vacancies occur in the future.

SRC Recommendation 3: Include a Vocational Rehabilitation Client Success Story at each meeting of the Council.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with this recommendation. During FY 2019, the SRC continued its initiative for BESB VR whereby a standing agenda item for SRC meetings consisted of a "VR Success Story", in the form of a presentation by a BESB VR client who has achieved an employment outcome. The SRC members continue to respond positively to this initiative, as it provides the SRC with an opportunity to hear value-added and diverse perspectives on BESB VR's ability to support clients and employers in the workplace.

SRC Recommendation 4: Support initiatives that develop leadership qualities in transition-age youth who are blind.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR supported this important recommendation. The SRC continued its support and sponsorship of the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), an annual week-long leadership training program for transition-age youth with disabilities to learn team-building, self-advocacy, and task management skills. The SRC is an ongoing co-sponsor of this program and considers its co-sponsorship to be very important and worthwhile.

SRC Recommendation 5: Identify strategies to address the fiscal constraints of BESB VR.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with this recommendation. Recognizing the fiscal challenges experienced in the state, as well as the reduced level of funding received through the federal reallotment process in FY 2017 and FY 2018 in comparison to prior years, the SRC formed a joint workgroup with designated members of the Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired. The workgroup was charged with making recommendations to the full membership of the SRC on strategies that could be utilized in an effort to stay out of an order of selection. What became evident to the workgroup members through their deliberations was that program costs were outpacing the availability of funding. While carry forward federal funds helped to sustain the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, with the substantial decline in federal reallotment funds in FY 2017 and FY 2018, the workgroup members concluded that difficult decisions would be required of the SRC if the goal for BESB VR was to continue to serve all eligible individuals into future years.

The SRC reviewed the proposals of the Order of Selection Workgroup, which included recommendations to modify policies in several purchased service categories that incur some of the higher program costs. Among these categories was post-secondary

education. The SRC deliberated on using the State of Connecticut Community College System rate as the baseline for determining the level of funding for circumstances where course credits earned through the community college system could be applied towards the degree requirements. The SRC also recommended that formalized standards for reviewing and approving client requests to receive funding for graduate school be articulated in policy.

The policies for residential personal adjustment training programs were also reviewed. It was noted that these programs extend over several months and that costs for some programs can reach \$8,000 per month. While the SRC recognized the importance and value of these services, it was also acknowledged that continuation of policies that allow for an open-ended, long-term provision of these types of services could not be sustained in future years for BESB VR to serve all eligible individuals. The SRC recommended several revisions to these policies, including the setting of a standard time frame for funding residential programs and clearly defining conditions whereby the timeframe can be extended based on individual client circumstances.

The SRC also recognized that as new adaptive technologies become available, there is a trend toward selling monthly service plans to support the interactive features of these devices. While such options often come with lower costs for the purchase of the device, it requires a long-term investment of funds to maintain the interactive features of the device (such as online or cellular connectivity). Additionally, the expansion of accessible apps for mainstream devices such as Smartphones has created scenarios where BESB VR is being asked to maintain the monthly cellular service plans for clients who wish to acquire Smartphones. The SRC recommended that policies clearly articulate that ongoing service plan costs are not the responsibility of BESB VR.

These proposed policy updates were put forth for public comment and were subsequently approved by the SRC and the Advisory Board, and were implemented in FY 2019.

SRC Recommendation 6: Participate in the development of the BESB VR section of the Unified State Plan, reviewing public comments and approving the final draft for submission to the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the United States Department of Labor.

BESB VR Response: The following comments were received during the public comment period. Responses from BESB VR follow each public comment. The SRC has deliberated on the public comments received and the proposed updates to the BESB VR section of the Unified State Plan. The SRC has unanimously approved this final draft for submission to the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the United States Department of Labor.

Comment: One commenter recommended that BESB VR contain the level of funding reserved for administrative overhead costs and reserve sufficient funding for client services versus staff salaries. The commenter also recommended that there should be a limit established for the number of clients per VR Counselor caseload.

BESB VR Response: Salaries and fringe benefits are not variables that BESB VR can alter. Collective bargaining agreements and state administered fringe benefits are the determining factors for these costs, and a formula approved by the U.S. Department of Education determines the amount of indirect costs to the federal VR grant. BESB VR has already reduced staffing levels through attrition and staff transfers to contain administrative costs as much as practical, and now has only 18 federally funded staff, compared to 24 federally funded staff when the prior state plan was completed in FY 2016. It would be difficult to maintain adequate service levels with additional reductions in this category, particularly if there is an expectation to maintain manageable caseload levels. While BESB VR recognizes the need for balanced and manageable caseloads, imposing fixed levels on case load sizes could result in some clients being placed on a waiting list until the caseloads fell below that level. Establishing a waiting list would only be permissible if BESB VR were in an order of selection. It should be noted that the average caseload size has decreased from 102 in FY 2016 to the current level of 84.

Comment: One commenter commended the quality of rehabilitation technology training received from BESB VR. The commenter further stated that more funding should be directed to serving clients, citing the cost of the large print calendar production as one area where savings could be achieved to put towards other VR services.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR appreciates the positive feedback regarding the quality of rehabilitation technology training that was provided. BESB VR has sufficient funding to serve all eligible individuals. Budgetary projections contained within this document are not proposed caps on expenditures, but rather estimates of how much funding will be necessary for purchased services in future years based upon analysis of prior year trends. BESB VR funds are not utilized for the design and production of the large print calendars. However, the cost in both actual dollars and staff time necessary to prepare the calendar for production has been a consideration that may result in a different approach toward the provision of large print calendars in the future.

Comment: One commenter stated that the BESB VR policy requirement for clients to obtain an additional level of approval to participate in more than 3 months of attendance at residential adjustment to blindness training programs creates an administrative burden on BESB VR staff, as well as the clients and the staff at the residential programs. The commenter further stated that these residential programs typically provide for a much longer time period to deliver the full scope of their curricula, varying in both cost and duration from program to program. The commenter recommended that other variables, such as total cost for the full program be considered instead of imposing a 3-month duration on initial approval to attend the residential program.

BESB VR Response: The State Rehabilitation Council and the Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired each deliberated on the proposed policy revisions, and a duly noticed public comment period was provided prior to their mutual approval of the policy change. It would be at the discretion of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired to decide if new deliberations on the provisions of this policy are desired.

Comment: One commenter stated that efforts should be undertaken to encourage transition-aged students to be more proactive early in the transition process to increase independence and critical thinking. Examples such as having the students provide evaluations of their participation at job fairs, expanding mentoring opportunities, offering peer-to-peer support networking, and leadership development activities were recommended. The use of technology would be instrumental for many of these activities, in part to overcome barriers imposed by limited transportation options. Development of BESB sponsored activities was emphasized. Additionally, the commenter recommended that personnel, such as para-professionals or job coaches, should receive training in the most meaningful and effective communication approaches with BESB clients.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR proposes to amend draft Goal B, Objective 2 to encompass these recommendations for transition-aged students. With revisions, the Objective would become:

“Pre-ETS clients and their parents or guardians are provided timely notice through the Educational Projects Coordinator or their assigned VR Counselor of BESB-sponsored, as well as BESB endorsed external opportunities that promote the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills.”

The new Strategy would become:

“BESB VR Counselors and the Educational Projects Coordinator working with the Pre-ETS clients shall develop initiatives, and also distribute information on existing initiatives, that focus on peer-to-peer support networking, mentoring matches to individuals with blindness who are employed in a wide-range of careers, job shadowing experiences, paid employment, internships, college preparatory programs, technology training programs, life skills programs (including work life balance) and related career development programs.”

The new Measure would become:

“Documentation of the services being provided to clients in each of the specific categories identified in the Strategy section.”

In reference to the recommendation to provide training to personnel, such as para-professionals or job coaches in the most meaningful and effective communication approaches with BESB clients, BESB VR has provided and shall continue to offer these types of training opportunities, with particular emphasis on the training and retraining of staff employed by the community rehabilitation programs that deliver contracted vocational services to clients served by BESB VR.

Comment: One commenter recommended, that in terms of career planning, to ensure that people who are blind, especially youth, gain real work experiences. This is also important for individuals who must change careers due to vision loss as they may have been limited to just one type of job before losing vision. The commenter also stressed the importance of providing training in the use of mainstream technology, as many of these individuals may not be familiar with how to use basic technology devices that would be necessary to compete in the labor market. The commenter also stressed the importance of providing resources that would enable these individuals to keep current with advances in technology.

BESB VR Response: The opportunity to participate in real work experiences through summer youth work opportunities offered through the American Job Centers as well as through community rehabilitation providers is an integral component of Pre-ETS services. Additionally, for clients served by BESB VR, there are opportunities for paid internships, on-the-job training arrangements and work assessments at employer locations included in the vocational rehabilitation process. VR Counselors assist clients in registering for services offered through the American Job Centers to access employment and training opportunities. The American Job Centers also offer classes in the use of some mainstream technologies that clients can participate in. However, much of the training in mainstream technology has required an individualized approach, as the skills and adaptive technology needs of each client vary. It has proven to be challenging to find approaches that successfully provide for technology training in group settings that can benefit large numbers of clients. The State Rehabilitation Council is exploring how other states are addressing this critical need area and there are plans to assess whether models in use in other states can be replicated for clients served in BESB VR.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

BESB VR Response: BESB VR agreed with all of the recommendations made by the SRC as detailed in the above section.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR did not reject any of the SRC's recommendations.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

BESB VR Response: BESB VR provides the full range of services across the entire state and does not utilize a Waiver of Statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

BESB VR Response: Not applicable.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

BESB VR Response: Not applicable.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

BESB VR Response: BESB is the designated state Vocational Rehabilitation unit for individuals who are blind within the Department of Aging and Disability Services, which is the designated state agency. The Commissioner on behalf of, and for the benefit of the Bureau executes cooperative agreements at the designated state agency level.

The Bureau is in a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration (SSA) that makes it possible to seek and receive reimbursement for certain costs associated with clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program that have achieved earnings at or above substantial gainful levels and have therefore transitioned off of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The process to seek reimbursement requires a combination of cooperative agreements at the state level. Client benefit status verification is obtained through an agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS). A cooperative agreement with the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) makes it possible to review wage records of individuals who are participating in BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation Program to determine if their earnings are above substantial gainful activity (SGA) levels and would therefore qualify the Bureau to request cost reimbursement from SSA. Cost reimbursement would be for the cost of BESB purchased services as well as fees for administrative and tracking costs associated with a client's case. In federal fiscal year 2019 BESB received \$154,884 from SSA under this program.

The Bureau also is in a cooperative agreement with the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Connecticut. This agreement has been developed to help with both programs' efforts to coordinate and provide services to individuals who are mutually served by the programs or who could benefit from these services if they were to apply and meet eligibility criteria. To maximize collaboration, a representative of the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program has served as an appointed member of the BESB State Rehabilitation Council.

The Bureau also has a cooperative agreement with the other Vocational Rehabilitation State Units within the New England Region that allows for the provision of services, such as mobility training for clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program who are attending training programs in those states.

For individuals who are deaf and blind, BESB works closely with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) for the coordination of services. Through a cooperative agreement, individuals who are deaf and blind can receive coordinated services from both public vocational rehabilitation programs. Through case conferencing, a determination is made as to which program will assume lead case management responsibilities, with the other program providing support services as needed. For clients who are receiving case management services through BRS, BESB offers vocational consultations, orientation and mobility services, and rehabilitation teaching assistance. The Bureau is also in a cooperative agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to ensure that recipients of Medicaid are aware of the services that are available through BESB VR, including the provision of information and referral services.

For clients who are blind and have developmental disabilities, the Bureau coordinates services with the State Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to bring about successful job placements with long-term supports. Each BESB VR Counselor works closely with DDS to establish a strong working relationship and a close collaboration of services with the DDS case manager.

BESB VR Counselors also coordinate services with the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for individuals who are blind and have a mental health diagnosis, acquired brain injury, and/or addiction.

The Bureau also is in a cooperative agreement with the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) that implements a state law requiring the department to report on a quarterly basis to DMV the names of individuals age 16 and older who have been declared legally blind in each preceding fiscal quarter. The DMV uses this information to notify such individuals that their driver's license is no longer valid.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

BESB VR Response: Through the Assistive Technology Act, BESB works closely with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide outreach and referrals of clients who are deaf and blind so that clients who meet the eligibility requirements of the Deafblind Technology Grant can apply for and receive specialized adaptive equipment to increase their access to communication. Since the inception of this program in 2012, a total of 94 individuals have received services, with the provision of 322 adaptive communication devices distributed. In addition, a low-interest loan program is available to assist clients who desire to acquire adaptive equipment that is not vocationally related, or who may need a short-term loan to cover the cost of repairs to personally owned devices.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

BESB VR Response: Being a part of the Statewide Workforce Development System, the BESB VR has access to the full range of programs carried out through the Department of Agriculture.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

BESB VR Response: The Bureau has entered into service agreements with Almada Lodge Times Farm Camp for the provision of transition programs for in-school and out-of-school youth. Programs include mentoring, leadership development, independent living skills trainings, and work experiences as camp counselors.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

BESB VR Response: At the Department level, the agency participates with the Office of the State Comptroller for a Purchase Card program that permits for expedited purchasing of goods and services needed by clients to participate in the rehabilitation process. The Department also has established a fee for service contract model with community rehabilitation providers across the state that enables BESB VR to purchase services at consistent pricing levels, making budget forecasting a more consistent and reliable process. The agency also utilizes state use contracts made available through the Department of Administrative Services for services that have been competitively procured for statewide agency use. Examples include interpreting services for individuals who are deaf and deafblind, and braille transcription services to convert books into braille formats.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

BESB VR Response: BESB VR is actively involved in a variety of transition school-to-work initiatives, with extensive collaboration and coordination at the administrative and service delivery levels of the organization. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (the designated state agency for BESB VR and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services VR Program) has a formal interagency agreement (Memorandum of Understanding - MOU) with the State Department of Education (SDE) that details the roles and responsibilities of Connecticut's VR programs and SDE in the transition process. This formal interagency agreement was enacted on November 17, 2017. At the direct service level, BESB VR Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of clients who are in middle school or high school and assist in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for students. The services that are detailed in the IEP of each student are factored into the development of each client's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) which must be developed within ninety (90) days of the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, or by the

time the client exits high school, whichever comes sooner. BESB VR Counselor involvement may begin as early as age 14, with referrals to the VR Program to initiate the application for VR services process. These referrals are most frequently initiated by the Education Consultants of the Bureau's Children's Services Program and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments that work directly for school districts. Pre-Employment transition services may be initiated at the age of 16. Pre-Employment transition services clients are assigned to one of the two BESB VR Counselors that are exclusively dedicated to serving these clients who are potentially eligible or who have been found eligible for services. Assignments are based on geographic location of the client. The BESB VR Counselors provide and coordinate the full range of pre-employment transition services to enable the students on their caseloads to gain exposure to careers through real work experiences, discussions with mentors who are blind, job shadowing, informational interviews and internships. Exploring post-secondary programs that can lead to credentialing in careers of interest are also coordinated by the Counselors. Within the higher education area, the agency has successfully negotiated with the State University System to establish a cooperative agreement that addresses the services available in the university setting for students with disabilities. This cooperative agreement includes the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and describes the responsibilities of the universities as well as the responsibilities of public vocational rehabilitation to ensure that students with disabilities achieve equal access to classroom instruction, internships, and school-sponsored activities.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

BESB VR Response: As identified in the formal interagency agreement, BESB VR program staff continue to participate and present information at in-service training programs organized by the Bureau for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are blind or visually impaired. BESB VR staff makes information available on transition initiatives, such as mentoring opportunities, independent living training programs, and work experiences that may be of interest to students who are blind or visually impaired. The Children's Services Program of the Bureau provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff to learn about low vision aids and adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded core curriculum activities, and resources that are available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB. In FY 2019, over 200 school district staff participated in the Fall Inservice Training Series sponsored by the agency.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

BESB VR Response: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program's Educational Projects Coordinator serves on the Statewide Transition Task Force, most recently joining the Steering Committee for this group. The Statewide Transition Task Force supports the Connecticut State Department of Education in its efforts to inform and guide students with disabilities, families, school districts, and community organizations to facilitate the progression from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, independent living, and community participation. The Steering Committee maintains the Mission Statement & Guiding Principles of the task force, develops committee activities and projects, creates and facilitates workgroups, and recommends outside experts to assist with the designated activities and projects. The Education Projects Coordinator also participates in the Connecticut Secondary Transition Symposium which brings students and their families together with educators

and other professionals to improve secondary transition programming and services for students with disabilities. The 5th annual symposium, with the theme of "Every Voice Matters", continued to build the capacity of educators and other professionals, in partnership with middle and high school students with disabilities and their families, to help ensure successful post-school outcomes. Participants learned about a variety of programs and resources to support students who are transitioning to adult life. The symposium included sessions specifically for students making college and career choices. The Connecticut Transition Community of Practice is another collaborative effort that the BESB VR Education Projects Coordinator participates in. The group brings multiple stakeholders together to collaborate and share ongoing secondary transition information, resources, activities and events in a centralized location that is accessible to all students, families, and statewide transition teams. The resources assist students, families and others in making informed decisions to achieve personal success including education, meaningful employment, self-sufficiency, and community access and involvement.

Per the Memorandum of Understanding with the State Department of Education (SDE), staff from SDE assist staff from BESB VR to connect with the individual Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to assure that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) developed by LEAs for youth with disabilities aged 16 or over include plans for the provision of educationally related transition services as defined in 34 C.F.R. 361.22(b)(4) and 34 C.F.R. 300.43. The educationally related transition services include activities identified by the LEAs that are based on the child's needs, consideration of the child's preferences, and are designed to facilitate movement from school to post-secondary activities, including employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from BESB VR are actively involved participants in the Planning and Placement Team meetings to assist with the formulation of transition goals and activities. To the maximum extent possible, the BESB VR Counselors also incorporate these transition goals into the IPE of the client to align these transition activities between the LEA and BESB VR.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

BESB VR Response: Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State Department of Education (SDE), the roles and responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the public educational system are clearly defined. This includes financial responsibilities as well as coordination of services and staff training. To facilitate this coordination, the Education Projects Coordinator from BESB serves on an interagency Transition Task Force and there is an appointed representative from the State Department of Education serving on the State Rehabilitation Council to BESB. As detailed in the MOU, at no cost to BESB VR, SDE provides general supervision of the implementation of the IDEA's requirements for special education and related services to ensure a free appropriate public education for children and youth with disabilities. SDE coordinates with BESB VR in disseminating information to LEAs regarding effective, results-based practices for preparing students with disabilities for post-secondary education, vocational training, competitive employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. SDE further collaborates with BESB to disseminate information about and train school personnel on how to coordinate services for students with disabilities as they transition to life after high school, including those students interested in supported employment. For each student with a disability with an IEP or Section 504 Plan that the LEAs have reason to believe may pursue subminimum wage employment following their exit from the school system, SDE assures that the LEAs document the provision of transition services in accordance with the documentation requirements of 34 C.F.R. 397.30(b)(1), including, at a minimum, the child's name, a description of the service or activity completed, the dated signature of the responsible educational official

documenting the completion of the required service or activity, and the dated signature of the responsible educational official who transmits the documentation of the provision of transition service. SDE further ensures that none of the LEAs enter into contracts with an entity for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

Per the MOU, BESB VR collaborates with the SDE in coordinating, providing, and documenting the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. BESB VR provides vocational rehabilitation services to students and youth who meet the eligibility criteria. BESB VR staff assist the LEAs in providing transition planning for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their IEPs and also work with the LEAs to develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) for each student eligible for BESB VR services before the student exits high school. BESB staff also provides consultation and technical assistance to assist the LEAs in planning for the transition of eligible students. For students with disabilities who seek subminimum wage from employers who hold special wage certificates under the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. 214 (c), BESB VR offers pre-employment transition services, and an offer to apply for vocational rehabilitation services. If the individual was found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and had an IPE, but was unable to achieve the employment outcome specified in the IPE, BESB VR can provide documentation of this outcome after obtaining a signed release of information.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

BESB VR Response: Since BESB maintains a registry of all students who are legally blind or visually impaired within Connecticut, the process for identifying and referring clients from the BESB Children's Services Program to the BESB VR Program is streamlined and efficient. The electronic case management system for BESB has a built-in tracking system for identifying clients by age range to further facilitate the referral of clients who desire to participate in vocational rehabilitation services. This system is unique in that it allows for BESB VR to be aware of and track every child in Connecticut who is legally blind or visually impaired and who is participating in public education.

The BESB VR Counselors work with the students, educators, parents or guardians and the Program's Education Projects Coordinator to identify careers of interest, develop career exploration opportunities, work and job shadowing experiences, mentoring activities, and leadership development programs.

Through the MOU with SDE, staff from that agency assist BESB with the distribution of information for LEAs to provide to students who may benefit from BESB VR services. SDE staff also provides information about the availability of BESB VR services to the LEAs to share with school personnel. SDE further assists the LEAs in providing outreach and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services and pre-employment transition services that can be offered by BESB VR.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

BESB VR Response: BESB uses a wide range of contractual agreements with accompanying fee schedules that have been established through a competitive bidding process by the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the designated state agency for the Blind and General VR programs. This provides a statewide comprehensive set of program options and services to choose from. Thirteen nonprofit community-based rehabilitation programs are available through these contractual agreements for clients to select from. The services that are offered through the community rehabilitation programs in the state include trial work experiences, work readiness training, community placement opportunities and job coaching, among other related services. BESB staff members conduct training seminars for staff of the community rehabilitation providers on blindness related topics such as orientation and mobility and the use of adaptive technology to ensure that programs and services are safe and accessible.

Additional fee agreements have been established with private non-profit service providers in other states where it is identified that these programs offer specific vocational and independent living services for persons who are blind. These agreements include non-profit rehabilitation providers in Louisiana, Colorado, Maine, Arkansas, Maryland, Minnesota, and Massachusetts.

Through a fee agreement with the National Federation of the Blind, the NFB Newslines are available for clients to access news, career information, and current events. This collaboration includes the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut, which provides funding to cover a portion of the overall cost.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

BESB VR Response: BESB has been actively involved in cooperative working relationships with other public and private agencies for many years with regard to supported employment and extended services. The BESB VR Counselors identify individuals who have a significant disability along with legal blindness who can potentially benefit from long-term supports through supported employment. This process begins as early as middle school and high school for transition-age youth through the Counselor's involvement in the Planning and Placement Team meetings and discussions, but it can also often occur during the adult years of clients in situations where supported employment services may be appropriate and beneficial.

The Bureau utilizes contractual agreements and fee schedules established by the Designated State Agency, the Department of Aging and Disability Services, to work with community providers to purchase supported employment services prior to the transition to the provider of extended services.

BESB continues to have an active working arrangement with the State of Connecticut, Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This cooperative agreement assists in the coordination and identification of training providers that have specific expertise when a client with a developmental disability and legal blindness could benefit from supported employment services. This working relationship also involves the utilization of the Department of Developmental Services as a long-term third-party provider of funding. In addition to the collaborative relationship with DDS, BESB has developed a working relationship with the State of Connecticut, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Through this arrangement, individuals who have a mental health diagnosis, acquired brain injury, or an addiction diagnosis along with legal blindness can access supported employment opportunities, with DMHAS providing the third-party funding.

Beyond the collaborative arrangements for third party funding with other state agencies, BESB VR continues to work with the community rehabilitation providers throughout the state that are contracted by the designated state agency for the provision of these services.

Staff from the Bureau participates in meetings and training seminars organized by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). This organization links community providers, employers, state agency representatives, and other resources together to exchange information on job placement strategies, funding sources, and employer job leads. BESB VR staff have presented at meetings of this organization on blindness related topics such as adaptive technology so that other providers in attendance would be aware of the options that exist for bringing about a successful job placement when accepting a referral from BESB VR for a client who is seeking a job placement with supported employment services.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

1. VR SERVICES; AND

BESB VR Response: The primary goal of coordinated activities with employers is to bring about long-term partnerships that foster a mutually beneficial relationship for both the employer and the clients served by BESB VR, while at the same time avoiding a

duplication of efforts. BESB VR is very aware of and sensitive to the time constraints of employers and seeks to work in collaboration with other partners in the Workforce Development System that also perform employer outreach to reduce the potential for overlap in job development efforts.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Coordinator serves as the BESB VR team lead for outreach to employers and the gathering of job lead information. This includes establishing relationships with employers that results in being added to their job announcement distribution lists in order to then share this information with the BESB VR Counselors. The BESB VR Counseling Coordinator also serves as the point of contact with the National Employment Team (NET), administered through the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The NET utilizes a business approach to facilitate outreach to larger employers that have a presence across multiple states. The NET is a valuable resource to develop relationships with these national companies, where access to Human Resources staff at the state level is less readily available. The NET coordinator puts the business's local human resources representative in contact with the Vocational Rehabilitation agency's point of contact. In turn, the local Vocational Rehabilitation agency point of contact and the human resources staff of the company can meet to discuss specific services or recruitment needs at the local branch level. The needed services can vary from providing job candidates for local job openings or providing in-service training to front line supervisors on disability topics, to offering job retention assistance for workers with disabilities who have requested work site accommodations.

Within the NET, there is an employer database, referred to as the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), where only job seekers who are receiving services from a public Vocational Rehabilitation agency can access the portal. Employers can search for qualified candidates through this portal as well. This helps the employer recruit pre-screened qualified candidates who have a disability.

BESB VR Counselors are members of the Business Service Teams within each of the five workforce regions, sharing job leads and learning of the employer outreach efforts of other members of these regional teams. Employer outreach activities performed by the BESB VR Counselors are tracked for reporting purposes.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

BESB VR Response: With the development of employer relationships, even when employers may not be immediately hiring, they can offer other valuable services such as informational interviews, job shadowing opportunities, and work assessment site hosting. Company tours can further be arranged for clients of BESB VR to learn about a wide variety of careers. This is particularly important for transition-age youth clients served by BESB VR, who may otherwise have very limited exposure to actual job sites during their high school years. Employer sites where current or former clients of the Bureau are employed have proven to be particularly beneficial in these situations. The opportunity for mentoring these young clients helps them to learn directly from another individual who is legally blind about careers in many of the occupations that provide solid earnings and long-term stability.

One such example is evident in an initiative launched by a former Chair of the Bureau's State Rehabilitation Council. As an employee of a leading employer in the aerospace industry, she successfully coordinated the startup of an annual mentoring event for transition-age students to spend a day at the company, touring the facility, shadowing employees and gaining inspiration by learning how she successfully navigated and problem-solved questions regarding work site accommodations, transportation, and career development.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

BESB VR Response: Through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS), recipients of Medicaid who have disabilities are made aware of the BESB VR program and BESB VR Counselors provide information and referral assistance for clients who express an interest in seeking services from DSS such as Medicaid benefits, and the Home and Community Based Services waivers.

Benefits Counselors from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services are also available to assist clients of BESB VR with understanding how employment earnings and public assistance benefits interact so that clients can make informed decisions regarding employment. The Benefits Counselors also explore with clients the many options that are available within the state and federal government programs including how to apply for Medicaid and Medicare, as well as health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

BESB VR Response: This Bureau has an active working arrangement with the State of Connecticut, Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This cooperative agreement assists in the coordination and identification of training providers that have specific expertise when a client with a developmental disability and legal blindness could benefit from supported employment services. This working relationship also involves the utilization of the Department of Developmental Services as a long-term third-party provider of funding. Efforts at coordinating customized employment services are also underway, with joint development of vendor qualifications for the delivery of the components of customized employment being finalized and readied for full implementation.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

BESB VR Response: BESB has developed a working relationship with the State of Connecticut, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Through this arrangement, individuals who have a mental health diagnosis, acquired brain injury, or an addiction diagnosis along with legal blindness can access supported employment opportunities, with DMHAS providing the third-party funding.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

BESB VR Response: The current composition of BESB VR includes one State Director, one Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator, one Quality Control Reviewer, one Educational Projects Coordinator, seven full-time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, two Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselors, three Rehabilitation Teachers (two of these staff members are Rehabilitation Technologists), one Administrative Assistant, and one Secretary.

With this staffing level, the staff to client ratio breaks down as follows: Administrative Assistant 1/760; Education Projects Coordinator 1/760; State Director 1/760; Secretary 1/760; Quality Control Reviewer 1/760; Rehabilitation Teachers 1/253; VR Counselor/Assistant Counselor 1/84; VR Counselor Coordinator 1/760; and VR Supervisor 1/760.

In terms of years of service, the breakdown for staff is as follows: 1 - 4 years of service 4/19 or 21%; 5 - 9 years of service 1/19 or 5%; 10 - 14 years of service 4/19 or 21%; 15 - 19 years of service 4/19 or 21%; 20 - 29 years of service 4/19 or 21%, over 30 years of service 2/19 or 11%.

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

BESB VR Response: The service delivery to the clients is divided into five regions throughout the state. At least one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is assigned to each of the five regions. The state is divided in half (East and West) for rehabilitation technology services, with one technologist covering each region. The Rehabilitation Technologists each conduct assessments for clients needing adaptive technology to participate in VR services. There is also one Rehabilitation Teacher who serves the entire state, providing independent living skills training and adaptive technology training with screen readers.

There is one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator that covers the entire state and works with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on case management strategies. This position also provides coordination of job development activities and employer engagement across the state. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator also serves a caseload of clients who are enrolled in college. He works closely with the offices of Disability Services at public and private institutions of Higher Education that clients from BESB VR are attending. Through this approach, consistent coordination of support services can be achieved.

The Educational Projects Coordinator serves as the Program's Transition School-to-Work coordinator, overseeing the statewide provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) in collaboration with two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors whose primary responsibility is to serve a caseload that is comprised of students with disabilities. The Educational Projects Coordinator also is responsible for the development and implementation of programs that provide students with opportunities to work through summer employment and internships, as well as providing career exposure experiences through job shadowing, employer tours, and mentor activities.

BESB VR also has one State Director, one Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, one Quality Control Reviewer and two clerical staff to support the administrative functions of the program.

The staffing composition of BESB VR aligns with the current needs for the delivery of services.

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

BESB VR Response: Over the next 5 years, the Bureau anticipates there will be vacancies due to retirements in the categories of State Director, Administrative Assistant, Education Projects Coordinator, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Rehabilitation Teacher. The demographic of this need is illustrated by the following description, listing the job title, current number of positions within that job title, the current number of vacancies in the job category and the projected need over the next five years.

Job Title--Total positions--Current vacancies--Projected vacancies over next 5 years:

Administrative Assistant: 1 -- 0 -- 1

Education Projects Coordinator: 1 -- 0 -- 1

State Director: 1 -- 0 -- 1

Secretary: 1 -- 0 -- 0

Quality Control Reviewer: 1 -- 0 -- 0

Rehabilitation Teachers: 3 -- 0 -- 2

VR Counselor/Assistant Counselor: 9 --0-- 2

VR Counselor Coordinator: 1 -- 0 -- 0

VR Supervisor: 1 --0 -- 0

The present Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-to-client ratio is 1 Counselor to 84 clients (or 1 to 76 when factoring in the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator's coverage of the college student caseload). These staffing levels are sufficient to serve the current client population and the anticipated number of new

referrals over the next five years. This conclusion is based on a trend analysis of the past 10 years that found an average of 164 new referrals per year and an average of 155 program participants exiting per year.

With the relatively high starting salary for master's level Rehabilitation Counselors compared to the private rehabilitation sector within the state, it is anticipated that recruitment efforts would again result in a sufficient applicant pool of qualified individuals if a VR Counselor vacancy were to occur. BESB VR recruits for individuals who meet the highest standard in the state (CRC eligibility) first. The competitive salary offered by the State of Connecticut for this job classification has resulted in the ability to hire individuals who possess this level of credentialing in most situations. If there are no qualified candidates from those recruitments, then recruitment will be made at the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor level.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

BESB VR Response: Central Connecticut State University, Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

BESB VR Response: BESB VR monitors the number of students enrolled in the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling program at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut. This program has 94 students enrolled with 21 expected to graduate in 2020. The number of Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling degree candidates is enough to address the projected recruitment needs over the next fiscal year.

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

BESB VR Response: Central Connecticut State University graduated 19 students with master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling in 2019.

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

BESB VR Response: BESB VR remains in contact with the institution of higher education in this state that offers a master's degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling to ensure that an adequate flow of graduates is anticipated for projected vacancies. When positions are available, recruitment efforts are conducted through job announcements that are placed on the Department of Administrative Services web site. BESB VR also distributes the job vacancy announcements to organizations of and for individuals who are blind within the state, as well as advertising nationally through Rehab Net, which is a list-serve that connects all of the state public vocational rehabilitation agencies across the country and the island territories. The list-serve for the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) is also utilized to distribute job announcements to ensure the widest possible distribution. Given the relatively competitive starting salaries for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in comparison to the private sector for similar positions, the BESB VR Program is not experiencing a retention issue beyond what is expected through retirements and career advancement decisions. When job openings do occur, the applicant pool is significant and allows for a wide range of potential candidates to be interviewed.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

BESB VR Response: All staff members working as Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor at BESB VR meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development requirements. These staff members meet these requirements by having a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely related field, as specified by the criteria for certification as a rehabilitation counselor by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). In addition, the State Director for BESB VR also meets the CRCC standard and holds the credential of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

There are two staff members that do not meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development requirements of a master's degree in Rehabilitation or a closely related field. As specified in BESB VR policy, the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, who meets this standard, approves all eligibility decisions, Individualized Plans for Employment, and case closures for these two staff who are both in the job title of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor.

There is no requirement in the job specification of the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor series to advance into the Counselor level. Staff hired into the job title of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor may seek continuing education to meet the qualifications of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor level, within available funding.

Working with the Department of Labor, the One-Stop Centers and their regional partners, BESB VR staff participate in training seminars on the needs of employers within the state. This includes training in the use of occupational outlook data as well as training in high demand jobs and the evolving workforce demographic. Staff has also received training in the use of Career Index Plus through a collaboration with the Job Driven VR Technical Assistance Center.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

BESB VR Response: BESB VR has continued to collaborate with the State Department of Labor to develop training for BESB VR staff in occupational outlook data and labor market projections, which is provided annually. An orientation to the apprenticeship program was also provided to the BESB VR staff. BESB VR staff work closely with the American Job Center partners, participating in regional team meetings with the business consultants from the partner agencies to identify employment opportunities for clients and to be kept current on emerging sector-based training opportunities within their regions of the state.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

BESB VR Update: BESB VR makes available a full range of training programs offered through public and private entities such as the Technical Assistance Centers, Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Council for State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). Program staff members are encouraged to identify training areas of particular interest for their individualized professional development in addition to BESB VR identifying programmatic training categories for staff to participate in to remain current in the field of rehabilitation.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work directly with their supervisor to identify areas for professional growth and development each year. Each employee of BESB VR receives at least one written evaluation per year, which is consistent with collective

bargaining agreements. The Supervisor of BESB VR meets with staff members regularly to assist with any areas of their job performance that could benefit from further development and to provide feedback on best practices that have proven to be effective in-service delivery. Technical assistance on policies and procedures is also provided during individualized meetings and during staff meetings. If an employee is found to need additional assistance and training in order to meet the job requirements, then a plan for improvement is developed. This may include the use of weekly reviews, additional written performance evaluations, and increasing the opportunity for the employee to participate in formalized training programs to increase skills and competencies.

Assistive Technology continues to be among the highest training priorities for staff in BESB VR, particularly since adaptive equipment is so often a component of success on the job for clients served by BESB VR. Training opportunities have included an Introduction to Accessible Educational Materials, How to Make Documents Accessible, How to Locate Captioned Videos and Caption Your Own, Ten Tips for Creating Accessible Web Content, Navigating the New Office Ribbon, Legal Requirements for Website Accessibility, Tips and Tricks with One Note, Using Google Docs and Google Chrome, Excel Tasks with JAWS in Excel, Using Fusion with Windows 10, and Navigating the Web with JAWS 2019.

Additional areas of staff training in the past year have included a seminar on the ethics standards issued by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification that all BESB VR staff participated in, an Employment First resources conference attended by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, the Supervisor and Director, a National Association of Workforce Development conference that featured one of the BESB VR Counselors as a panelist, two conferences on the National Employment Team (NET), the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind fall and spring conferences, the fall and spring conferences of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, and a Business Engagement Conference on emerging careers, economic outlook projections, and accommodations in the workplace.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

BESB VR Update: Information from the technical assistance centers is made available to staff and has been utilized to assist with interpreting requirements regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services, as well as for the sharing of information on successful practices. Information gleaned from staff attendance at local, regional and national conferences is also shared with coworkers, providing links to web-based literature and research that is made available during the conference presentations. Through regional meetings of the State Directors of Vocational Rehabilitation, research on quality assurance strategies is also made available. The State Director and VR Supervisor have further been engaged in reviewing the available models for delivering customized employment in order to assist the program in finalizing a collaborative approach with other interested state agencies for the provision of this service.

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

BESB VR Update: There are two Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselors who are bicultural, one of whom is fluent in Spanish, and who serves Spanish-speaking clients throughout the State. BESB VR also provides information to clients in large-print, Braille, electronic, and audio formats to ensure that materials are accessible. BESB VR staff can also utilize contracted translation services to communicate with clients in other languages. Interpreter services for individuals who are deaf are available on a fee for service basis, including tactile interpreters for clients who are deaf and blind and whose preferred mode of communication is through sign language.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

BESB VR Update: Collaboration through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) occurs on a continual basis through joint training programs and initiatives. Staff members from BESB VR participate in transition work groups including the Transition Task Force that is facilitated by staff from the State Department of Education. There is also a Community of Practice group that focuses on best practices and emerging trends in transition services to youth with disabilities. This multi-agency initiative includes representatives from BESB VR as well as the State Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Developmental Services, and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS).

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

BESB VR Response: The SRC to BESB VR commissioned the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University to conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment in 2017 to assist the SRC and BESB VR with establishing goals and priorities. The full report as issued by CPPSR in December, 2017 appeared in its entirety in the last update to the BESB VR portion of the Unified State Plan. Among the variables reviewed, CPPSR conducted an analysis of BESB VR services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

CPPSR noted that BESB's blind registry had shown a steady increase over recent fiscal years. Data for the most recent year included in the statewide needs assessment found that the registry had grown by 4.3% from the prior year, going from 11,367 individuals in FY 14 to 11,854 individuals in FY 15. Since legal blindness meets the BESB VR definition of a significant disability, the results from this analysis projected a proportionate increase in the number of individuals with most significant disabilities. CPPSR further noted the deteriorating economic climate and the challenges these economic factors presented for securing competitive, integrated employment for individuals who experience multiple, significant barriers to employment. BESB VR has recognized the accompanying necessity to factor this information into projections for an increased need to offer supported employment services as an option for individuals who need long-term supports to achieve and maintain competitive and integrated employment.

The Council further utilized the findings and recommendations within this report to assist with the development of goals, objectives, strategies, and measures for the state plan. Among its findings, CPPSR noted the following:

- 1. Comparing BESB, state, and national statistics, CPPSR found that overall, Bureau clientele enrolled in the VR program who self-identify their ethnicity reasonably reflect both the state and national minority population at approximately 33.5%.**
- 2. Youth - BESB has an extremely efficient process for identifying clients from Children's Services and referring them to the VR program.**
- 3. BESB relies heavily on federal reallotment dollars, money that has dwindled since the last assessment. The significant decline in reallotment dollars poses a difficult challenge to BESB - how to do more with less, all while continuing to offer the quality services that the Bureau is accustomed to delivering.**
- 4. It is CPPSR's conclusion that BESB is extremely-forward thinking, anticipating and addressing future complexities with careful consideration before they become urgent. It is this type of consistently-applied operational paradigm that contributes to high client satisfaction rates in a difficult economic climate.**

As a part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Center for Public Policy and Social Research also put forth the following recommendations, each of which are followed by a summary of actions to date:

1. Increased promotion of client self-resourcefulness to leverage staff time and improve service;

BESB VR Update: BESB VR has dedicated a Rehabilitation Teacher to serve as an individual trainer for the Career Index Plus, a web-based product that enables clients to actively engage in career exploration and job search activities. BESB VR staff are extensively using this product, with over 16,000 site visits by staff since the inception of this technical assistance initiative through the Job Driven VR Technical Assistance Center in FY 2017. Using a unique feature of this web-based product, BESB VR Counselors have invited 89 clients to utilize the product and link their career exploration and job seeking activities with their VR Counselor for joint follow along reviews of progress.

2. Re-examine volunteer and college intern opportunities to leverage staff time;

BESB VR Update: This BESB recommendation has been rolled into a broader initiative for the designated state agency's strategic plan. Job titles across the bureaus that could benefit from having interns or volunteers have been identified and work is underway to standardize a template for memoranda of agreements with colleges, universities, and certificate programs. The Bureau has also utilized the Volunteer Program Coordinator's assistance in securing volunteers to provide time-limited office support activities.

3. Clearly vocalize Bureau initiatives to employees to spread knowledge and boost morale;

BESB VR Update: The State Director conducts three bureau-wide staff meetings per year. Included in each staff meeting are program updates by each of the Program Supervisors so that all staff within the Bureau are aware of the initiatives and priorities in each program. An update on the designated state agency's strategic plan is also included in each meeting. Certificates of Appreciation are presented to staff at these meetings as well, based upon nominations received by clients and coworkers. Specific to the VR Program, the State Director has articulated to staff the priorities around collaboration and coordination with other partners in the workforce development system and developed a form that VR Counselors update each month to document how their work activities are aligning with these priorities.

4. Increase the use of recorded materials to leverage staff time and improve service;

BESB VR Update: The VR Program client handbook has been updated, recorded in English and Spanish and placed on the agency website. It is provided to all clients in their preferred format at the time of eligibility.

5. Increase recruitment of client and community constituencies as Bureau advocates;

BESB VR Update: The Bureau has active involvement and interaction with the State Rehabilitation Council, Deafblind Advisory Committee, Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired, and the Statewide Committee of Blind Vendors. Each of these groups meets quarterly. Their membership includes individuals who are blind as well as representatives from the organizations of and for individuals who are blind. Meeting minutes from each group are widely distributed and posted on the agency website.

6. Undertake a systematic review of undeveloped synergies with other state/community entities, both within and outside of the agency;

BESB VR Update: As noted in the response to recommendation 5, the Bureau is actively engaged with a wide range of partner organizations that represent a broad perspective on matters related to vocational rehabilitation, continuing education, advocacy, and service delivery options. Through updates that are provided at the quarterly meetings of the State Rehabilitation Council, Deafblind Advisory Committee, Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired, and the Statewide Committee of Blind Vendors, there is substantial synergy in place.

7. Strengthen the institutional memory of the Bureau by designing an employee-authored manual;

BESB VR Update: Prior to retirement, the VR Counselor assigned to work primarily with college students met with the staff that would be assuming these job duties in order to

assist them with developing instructional guides for the various activities and timelines associated with them. In addition, the State Director has initiated the creation of a calendar-style timeline document of monthly activities that includes due dates for federal reports to assist with succession planning.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

BESB VR Update: Individuals from underserved populations are tracked in BESB VR to ensure that they are engaged in services and fully understand the scope of available services that can be provided. Before any individual from a traditionally underserved population is inactivated from BESB VR with an unsuccessful outcome, a supervisory review process is required. The Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor confirms that the individual was provided with information in his or her preferred language and accessible format. Additionally, the Supervisor reviews the case record of services to confirm documentation is present, substantiating that the individual was afforded the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding participation in BESB VR.

BESB VR employs two Counselors that are bicultural, one of whom is fluent in Spanish. BESB VR also employs three Counselors who are African-American. These five staff are available to provide outreach to community-based organizations that can offer linkages to traditionally underserved communities. Examples of outreach activities in Program Year 2018 included meetings with representatives at 3 churches in Waterbury that have large congregations from among the African-American community. Information about BESB VR services was distributed at these meetings. BESB VR also participated in the “Dads Matter Too -- Community Provider Day,” hosting a resource table at this all-day community event. Outreach to the Hispanic Coalition has brought about opportunities for work evaluations and internships for BESB VR clients. Outreach to the Bridge to Success Community Partnership has led to the initiation of discussions for the provision of work-based learning opportunities for transition-age youth served by BESB-VR.

Working with Latinos who lack English language skills has also been an emphasis of the BESB VR Program. Outreach efforts have occurred with the Center for Latinos Progress, Adult Education, the Hartford Public Library, and Community Colleges in the Hartford area to coordinate English as a Second Language classes or programs for clients to gain the English language skills necessary to be successful in obtaining employment in a wider range of occupations. Additionally, engaging clients who have some basic English language with the American Job Centers to enroll them into classes and or training sessions that assist with resume writing or translating Spanish resumes into English has also been occurring. At the American Job Centers, these clients have also participated in mock interviews, and job seeking skills classes have also been utilized. Clients are also informed about and encouraged to use the basic technology available to them via their IOS devices or Android devices, such as Google Translate and other translators to assist them with travel and communication while on the job or in the community.

Sign language interpreter services to communicate effectively with individuals who utilize sign language, including tactile signing, can be purchased through contracted vendors to effectively communicate about services that are available to individuals who are deaf and blind.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

BESB VR Update: Approximately 30% of Connecticut residents identify themselves as having a minority background. This is further reflected statistically as 15.36% Hispanic/Latino, 10.47% African American, 4.35% Asian, 0.26% Native American, and 0.03% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Clients presently participating in BESB VR favorably reflect the state’s demographic with 26% of clients self-identifying as African American, 20% as Hispanic/Latino, 3% as Asian, less than 1% as Native American, and less than 1% as Pacific Islander.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

BESB VR Update: BESB VR has been actively involved in referring clients to other programs and services available through the statewide workforce development system. The level of commitment to facilitate client engagement in other components of the system is evident in the data that reflects 51 clients who have engaged in Adult Employment and Training Programs, 42 clients engaged in Adult Education Programs, 8 clients engaged in Dislocated Worker Programs, 4 clients engaged in Job Corps, 104 clients enrolled in Wagner-Peyser, and 7 clients enrolled in the Youth Initiatives during Program Year 2018. BESB VR finds great value in these partnerships, particularly given the lean fiscal situation. Maximizing the resources and services available through other components of the statewide workforce development system has been a priority for BESB VR.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

BESB VR Update: In addition to a Transition Coordinator, BESB VR has dedicated two VR Counselors to work exclusively with Pre-Employment Transition-Age students. There are currently 107 clients who are recipients of Pre-Employment Transition Services. The VR Counselors participate in planning and placement team meetings to address the full range of services that are available. Real work experiences are coordinated in both after-school and summer jobs. Career exploration and job shadowing opportunities are further provided to many of these students as well. With the existence of a Children's Services Program at BESB, VR staff have a strong linkage for identifying referrals of new clients who are potentially eligible for Pre-Employment Transition Services. Education Consultants from the Children's Services Program and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments from the school districts often coordinate with the Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Coordinator to develop expanded core curriculum activities that feature mentoring, career exposure, and independent living skills training for clients served in that program as well as clients that are mutually served by both programs simultaneously.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

BESB VR Update: BESB VR has identified two areas for improvement: (1) providing training to staff of community rehabilitation programs on blindness related adaptive technology that is commonly utilized for training and employment; and (2) adaptations that are necessary to enable clients to access training materials. BESB VR sponsored a training with staff of the contracted community rehabilitation programs to address these two topic areas. No additional needs to establish, develop or improve upon these programs have been identified.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

BESB VR Update: In recognition of the extensive need for transition-age youth to acquire knowledge of careers in demand, and to learn of the successes of adults who are legally blind, BESB VR organizes and conducts career exposure programs, mentoring programs, college days, and skills acquisition events, seeking out role models who are legally blind and employed or enrolled in higher education to participate in these events and programs. The BESB VR Transition Coordinator and the Pre-Employment Transition Counselors work directly with school district staff to incorporate these activities into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or service plan of the students to emphasize the inclusion of these career development strategies as a critical component of the overall education process. BESB VR also utilizes job shadowing to expose transition-age youth to actual employment situations. Real work experiences for students with disabilities are crucial for the development of positive worker traits as well as developing self-

confidence and money management skills. In the Program Year 2018, 66 Pre-Employment Transition opportunities were provided, including 26 paid work experiences.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES
BESB VR Update: As of the fourth quarter in Program Year 2019, there are 615 eligible individuals in BESB VR. The Blind Registry for BESB has 9,338 individuals in the state of Connecticut who are legally blind or who have significant vision loss. Connecticut has a state statute that requires eye doctors, physicians, and advanced practice registered nurses to refer to the Department of Aging and Disability Services all individuals whom they have identified to be legally blind.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

BESB VR Update: At the onset of FY 2020 there were 620 eligible individuals, 604 of whom had implemented IPEs. The projected number of new IPEs for FY 2020 is approximately 125. Added to the 620 eligible individuals with pending and implemented IPEs at the onset of FY 2020, this would represent approximately 745 eligible individuals that are projected to receive services under an IPE in FY 2020. Projections for FY 2021 closely parallel FY 2020 projections, with approximately 750 individuals anticipated to receive services under an IPE in that fiscal year. In FY 2022, anticipated growth in the program, resulting from continued and focused outreach efforts to eye doctors and community-based organizations, is anticipated to yield an increase in the total number of eligible individuals served, potentially reaching 775 eligible individuals.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

BESB VR Update: In FY 2019, 3 new individuals were found eligible for supported employment services, bringing the total number of eligible individuals to 27 for that fiscal year. Of that total, 9 individuals were youth with disabilities. In FY 2019 there were 4 individuals who exited BESB VR, 2 of whom achieved employment outcomes, leaving 23 individuals who were eligible for supported employment at the onset of FY 2020. It is projected that 3 more individuals will become eligible for supported employment services in FY 2020, bringing the total to 26 eligible individuals. It is further anticipated that 2 more individuals will exit BESB VR in FY 2020, resulting in 24 eligible individuals at the onset of FY 2021. In FY 2021, it is projected that 3 new individuals will be found eligible for supported employment services, 1 of whom is likely to be in the category of youth with a disability. This would bring the total number of eligible individuals in FY 2021 to 27. It is further anticipated that through enhanced collaboration with the school districts, over time there will be a gradual increase in the number of students entering into supported employment placements, resulting in approximately 4 individuals who would exit BESB VR through supported employment by the end of FY 2021. This would result in 23 individuals eligible for supported employment at the onset of FY 2022. If a similar trend continues, then FY 2022 could include an additional 5 individuals who would become eligible for supported employment services during that fiscal year.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

BESB VR Update: Not applicable.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

BESB VR Update: Not applicable.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

BESB VR Update: In FY 2019, there were 722 eligible individuals with IPEs over the course of the fiscal year. BESB VR expended approximately \$1.41 million on purchased services for eligible individuals with IPEs during the year, and \$3.04 million on administrative and operating costs. Total Program costs including all purchased services,

staffing, and administrative operations was approximately \$4.45 million for the year. For FY 2020, budget projections indicate that approximately \$4.73 million will be expended on combined Program costs, including an estimated \$1.52 million to provide purchased services to approximately 745 individuals, and \$3.21 million in administrative and operational costs. This estimate includes inflationary adjustments, inclusion of indirect cost charges of 10.3 percent to BESB VR, as well as projected costs to serve transition-age students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services. For FY 2021, budget projections indicate that approximately \$4.94 million will be expended on combined Program costs, including an estimated \$1.61 million to provide purchased services to approximately 750 individuals, and \$3.33 million in administrative and operational costs. This estimate includes inflationary adjustments, inclusion of indirect cost charges of 10.3 percent to BESB VR, as well as projected costs to serve transition-age students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services. For FY 2022, budget projections indicate that approximately \$5.07 million will be expended on combined Program costs, including an estimated \$1.75 million to provide purchased services to approximately 775 individuals, and \$3.32 million in administrative and operational costs. This estimate includes inflationary adjustments, inclusion of indirect cost charges of 10.3 percent to BESB VR, as well as projected costs to serve Transition-age students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services.

With the availability of \$3.94 million in Title I carry over funds from FY 2019, in addition to the federal Title I allotment of \$3.25 million (representing 15 percent of the total Title I allotment received by Connecticut), and state matching funds of approximately \$783,000, BESB VR does not anticipate the need to enter into an Order of Selection in FY 2020, FY 2021 or FY 2022.

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

BESB VR Update: The following goals, objectives, strategies and measures of performance were developed and agreed to by BESB VR and the State Rehabilitation Council.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

BESB VR Update:

Goal A: Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals of BESB VR.

Objective: BESB will engage employers to identify their business needs and to educate them on BESB services and candidate pool.

Strategy: BESB VR Counselor Coordinator and VR Counselors will present on the topic of BESB employer support services to trade organizations and employer membership groups.

Measure: Documentation of 4 presentations annually.

Objective: Develop BESB Client Success stories that can be marketed to employers in multiple formats.

Strategy: Collection of 5 success stories developed for print and internet distribution.

Measure: Documentation of distribution to employers and postings on the internet.

Objective: BESB VR clients utilize Career Index Plus or comparable web-based career exploration tool to actively participate in job seeking activities.

Strategy: Rehabilitation teachers and/or fee for service vendors teach no fewer than 10 job seeking clients per year how to navigate and utilize at least one job search website on the internet.

Measure: Documentation of utilization by each client.

Objective: Each BESB VR Counselor with job development responsibilities shall engage clients on their caseloads in job fair attendance.

Strategy: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will share information on job fairs within their regions with job seeking clients on their individual caseloads and facilitate the attendance of clients at job fairs.

Measure: Documentation of no fewer than 5 clients per VR Counselor caseload per year attending a job fair.

Goal B: Provide coordinated services to students with disabilities to prepare for careers and post-secondary education after exit from high school.

Objective: BESB VR shall continue to maintain two full-time Counselors to exclusively serve clients that are in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) category.

Strategy: Pre-Employment Transition clients will be assigned to one of the counselor caseloads to receive specific, qualifying Pre-ETS services with dedicated Pre-ETS funding.

Measure: Documentation of caseload assignments.

Objective: Pre-ETS clients and their parents or guardians are provided timely notice through the Educational Projects Coordinator or their assigned VR Counselor of BESB-sponsored, as well as BESB endorsed external opportunities that promote the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

Strategy: BESB VR Counselors and the Educational Projects Coordinator working with the Pre-ETS clients shall develop initiatives, and also distribute information on existing initiatives, that focus on peer-to-peer support networking, mentoring matches to individuals with blindness who are employed in a wide-range of careers, job shadowing experiences, paid employment, internships, college preparatory programs, technology training programs, life skills programs (including work life balance), and related career development programs.

Measure: Documentation of the services being provided to clients in each of the specific categories identified in the Strategy section.

Objective: BESB VR and the SRC co-sponsor leadership development activities and camps for groups of Pre-ETS eligible clients.

Strategy: The SRC and BESB VR provide co-sponsorship funding for the Youth Leadership Forum, and similar programs if available.

Measure: Documentation of the funds committed.

Objective: Partner with organizations that provide financial literacy training to deliver this service to Pre-ETS clients.

Strategy: Identify organizations that provide financial literacy training, create accessible training materials, and deliver the training.

Measure: Financial literacy training is provided to a total of 15 Pre-ETS clients.

Goal C: Utilize Innovation and Expansion authority to engage in continuous improvement initiatives, to increase access to services and activities that can benefit groups of individuals with visual impairment or legal blindness, to increase access to career information, adaptive technology, self-advocacy, and public awareness of the employment potential of individuals served by BESB VR.

Objective: BESB VR shall provide funding for electronic access to career and news information.

Strategy: Funding provided to have NFB Newsline available to BESB VR clients.

Measure: Documentation of purchase order for NFB Newsline.

Objective: Provide access to the latest adaptive technology devices for clients to try out for assessment purposes.

Strategy: Purchase new adaptive technology devices for the BESB Technology Lab and the Technology Lab at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind.

Measure: Documentation of purchases for technology devices.

Objective: The SRC utilizes an entity experienced in administering consumer satisfaction surveys and needs assessments to conduct the fiscal year 2020 Consumer Satisfaction

Survey and Comprehensive Needs Assessment, utilizing the results to develop continuous improvement initiatives.

Strategy: The SRC selects a vendor, reviews the results of the reports, and works with Program staff to implement strategies that address the results and trends identified in the reports.

Measure: Documentation of purchase of survey and comprehensive needs assessment, Consumer Satisfaction and Comprehensive Needs Assessment reports received and reviewed with Program staff.

Objective: SRC representatives participate in state, regional and national conferences and programs that provide opportunities to increase public awareness of the employment capabilities of BESB VR clients, increase the SRC members knowledge and understanding of the public VR Program, and create opportunities for learning best practices that can develop into new goals and strategies for BESB VR to explore and implement, if applicable.

Strategy: The SRC Chair is provided with information about upcoming conferences, seminars and activities from the BESB Director and designates an SRC member or members to participate and share information with the full membership.

Measure: SRC members attend CSAVR, NCSAB and other national, regional or statewide conferences or seminars that address the components stated in the objective.

Objective: Provide guidance document to Windows 7 users on available options after Microsoft support for Windows 7 ends.

Strategy: Rehabilitation Technologists develop a summary document of the issues and possible solutions to share with clients of the Bureau.

Measure: Document is posted on agency website and distributed to organizations of and for individuals who are blind, and mailed to clients upon request.

Objective: Create a tutorial series in audio format on the basics of navigation and use of the Windows 10 operating system with adaptive technology.

Strategy: Rehabilitation Technologists develop a series of three audio tutorials for distribution.

Measure: Tutorials posted on agency website and distributed to organizations of and for individuals who are blind, and mailed upon request to clients.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

BESB VR Update: The comprehensive needs assessment and the consumer satisfaction survey results were utilized by BESB VR and the State Rehabilitation Council in considering and developing the goals as stated in the preceding subsection.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

BESB VR Update: The Bureau has factored in our role in achieving statewide WIOA performance measures in establishing the goals for the VR program.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

BESB VR Update: The State Rehabilitation Council has reviewed emerging adaptive technology considerations, in addition to the comprehensive needs assessment, the consumer satisfaction survey results, and trends in outcomes and services provided to address the goals that were developed.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

BESB VR Update: BESB VR is not operating under an order of selection and provides services to all eligible individuals.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

BESB VR Update: Not applicable.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

BESB VR Update: Not applicable.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

BESB VR Update: Not applicable.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BESB VR Update: Not applicable.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

BESB VR Update: In the event that an Order of Selection were to become necessary, BESB VR has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of the established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

BESB VR Update: It is the primary goal and priority of BESB VR to consider supported employment as an option in all circumstances where the provision of these services will increase the likelihood of job placement success for people with significant, multiple barriers to employment.

In Program Year 2018, 3 new individuals were found eligible for supported employment services, bringing the total number of eligible individuals to 23 for the program year. Of that total, 11 individuals were youth with disabilities. In Program Year 2018 there were 3 individuals who exited BESB VR, 1 of whom achieved an employment outcome, leaving 20 individuals who were eligible for supported employment at the onset of Program Year 2019.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program received \$45,000 in Title VI funds allotted for FY 2019, of which \$22,500 was apportioned for youth with disabilities. Of that amount, \$929 in the federal funds were expended and \$2,500 in required state matching funds for youth were also expended during the time period which encompassed Program Year 2018. One client achieved an employment outcome in Program Year 2018 after being found eligible for supported employment services. For this individual, a community rehabilitation provider was utilized for on-the-job supports and the Department of Developmental Services was the provider of long-term supports.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has found it challenging to utilize the Title VI funding under the allowable uses that were placed upon these funds in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Under prior regulations, these funds could be utilized to explore vocational opportunities through work assessments, rehabilitation technology assessments, and a host of other support services that were incorporated into each client's IPE. Under current rules, these funds can only be utilized for support after a job hire, primarily in the form of job coaching and extended services. It is a primary goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to identify strategies that will result in a job hire so that greater utilization of these funds can be achieved. This strategy will necessarily rely upon Title I funds to provide for the work assessments, short-term internships with supports, and for the provision of adaptive technology so the individuals can have the opportunity to demonstrate to potential employers their capabilities.

While community rehabilitation providers will continue to be utilized as the providers of extended services when available, greater emphasis on natural supports through the employer will be encouraged as a goal in the future. Where available and feasible, natural supports through a client's family to expand options for the provision of support services will also be encouraged. With the opportunity to offer extended services funding to youth with disabilities to provide for longer-term supports on the job, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall also work closely with the Planning and Placement Teams in the school districts to make them aware of these funding options to support clients placed into supported employment.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

BESB VR Update: In order to facilitate the identification of supported employment options for transitioning high school students, the two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors assigned to work with this specific client population participate in Planning and Placement Team meetings (PPTs) and work in cooperation with the Children's Services Program at BESB. The teams are informed about the scope of vocational rehabilitation services, including the option for providing up to 4 years of extended services for eligible individuals who meet the requirements. Education Consultants from the Bureau's Children's Services Program are also made aware of this provision to assist in facilitating discussions with team members and parents or guardians of these individuals. The Bureau has available funding to support youth with disabilities in extended services and looks forward to entering into such arrangements with school districts, state agencies, private community providers, or directly with employers who can offer natural supports after the period of extended services funding.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

BESB VR Update: The Bureau works collaboratively with the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, employers, and community providers to identify and secure alternative sources of long-term funding and support, where available.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BESB VR Update: Utilizing the results and recommendations from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, as well as the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, BESB VR, in collaboration with the SRC, has identified several areas that need further expansion and improvement to better serve clients.

From an analysis of the number of new applicants into the Vocational Rehabilitation Program as well as the overall number of new referrals into the Bureau, a longitudinal decline has been noted. Since eye doctors represent the primary source of new referrals into the Bureau, a focused outreach effort was instituted toward the end of FY 2019, continuing into FY 2020. The eye doctor reporting form was updated to add clarity and definitions of both legal blindness and visual impairment. A section was added to allow for the reporting of functional vision for circumstances where consistent results cannot be obtained during eye examinations. This form was posted on the agency website, followed by a mailing of the new form to over 1,100 eye doctors across the state. This outreach effort will be conducted again to ensure that eye doctors are reminded of the statutory reporting requirements and the availability of an improved reporting format. Additionally, each of the VR Counselors will incorporate focused outreach to community-based organizations into their work activities to make these organizations aware of the services that are available through BESB VR.

To add greater clarity to the responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and those of the client, the Client Services Handbook was updated and posted on the agency website. This handbook is available in English, Spanish, Braille, large print, and audio versions and it provides an overview of the available services along with descriptions of the processes for requesting these services. A notification was sent to organizations of and for individuals who are blind informing them of this handbook update. The handbook is also provided to clients at the time of eligibility determination. Strategies for ensuring adequate caseload coverage when VR Counselor vacancies occur have also been identified. Options such as seeking approval for a retiree to cover a caseload temporarily and seeking existing staff who are available to work additional hours to help maintain caseload coverage until vacant positions are filled shall be fully considered to reduce interruptions to service delivery in the future.

With the recognition that caseload sizes do not make it practical for the VR Counselors to dedicate large amounts of time to assist every individual in job seeking activities, BESB VR has dedicated a Rehabilitation Teacher to serve as the primary point of contact to teach clients how to register for and utilize the Career Index Plus, a web-based product that enables clients to actively engage in career exploration and job search activities. The web-based product includes a vocational interest inventory, economic outlook information, and links to immediate job openings, searchable by location. VR Counselors are actively encouraging their assigned clients to register for this self-directed service and to report their activities back to their VR Counselor. It is anticipated that through this increased focus on the BESB VR Program working in partnership with clients, that increased access to job opportunities will result.

Additionally, working in close collaboration with the regional workforce boards, the BESB VR Counselors will continue to participate in business services teams to learn about upcoming job opportunities. Outreach to community colleges to identify certificate program opportunities shall also remain a priority to assist clients with identifying and pursuing careers that are available through these types of initiatives.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

BESB VR Update: BESB VR employs two full time Rehabilitation Teachers in the role of Technologists who are available to provide individualized assessments on adaptive technology options and solutions so that clients can make informed decisions as to the best option for their particular vocational training and employment situations. The Technologists are able to provide these assessments at the employer site, training facility, or home of the client by utilizing a portable array of technology devices that are maintained by BESB VR. The Technologists are further available to offer short-term training in the use of adaptive technology that is needed for participation in vocational training or employment. A third Rehabilitation Teacher is available to provide training to clients in the use of Career Index Plus with adaptive technology so that clients can be more fully engaged in the career exploration and job seeking process.

Additionally, BESB VR maintains a fully equipped adaptive technology laboratory in Windsor that is available for both assessments and training sessions. These training sessions can be done in person or remotely with the use of tandem training through the internet. In collaboration with the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind, an additional technology laboratory is located at their facility in New London. BESB VR further utilizes fee for service vendors for training in the use of adaptive technology devices in circumstances where training is required over multiple sessions that stretch beyond the capacity of the on-staff Rehabilitation Teachers. Through the Assistive Technology Act, BESB works closely with BRS to provide outreach and referrals of clients who are deaf and blind so that clients who meet the eligibility requirements of the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program can apply for and receive specialized adaptive equipment to increase their access to communication.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

BESB VR Update: As part of a new strategy to increase outreach to community-based organizations to make them aware of available services, all of the VR Counselors will have an outreach goal incorporated into their work activities. The individualized relationships the Counselors have established thus far with the community-based organizations have strengthened the outreach activities into the local communities, but this needs to be expanded upon to ensure a wider reach across the entire state. While the demographic data strongly indicates that BESB VR is effectively serving individuals with disabilities who are minorities, the decline in new referrals to BESB VR further suggests that more outreach activity is necessary to ensure that organizations and individuals are made aware of the services that BESB VR can offer.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

BESB VR Update: The two Pre-Employment Transition Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of students with disabilities and assist in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for these students. The services that are detailed in the IEP of each student are factored into the development of each client's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which must be developed within ninety (90) days of the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, or by the time the client exits high school, whichever comes sooner. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor involvement can begin as early as age 14, with Pre-Employment Transition Services commencing at age 16. Referrals to BESB VR are most commonly initiated by the Education Consultants of BESB's Children's Services Program and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments that work directly for school districts. Since BESB maintains a registry of all students who are legally blind or visually impaired within Connecticut, the process for identifying and referring clients from Children's Services to BESB VR is streamlined and efficient. The electronic case management system for BESB has a built-in tracking system for identifying clients by age range to further facilitate the referral of clients who desire to participate in vocational rehabilitation services. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with the students, educators, parents or guardians, and the Program's Transition Coordinator to identify careers of interest, develop career exploration opportunities, work and job shadowing experiences, mentoring activities, and leadership development programs. In addition to serving on the Statewide Transition Taskforce, BESB VR's Transition Coordinator is also an active member of the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice.

BESB VR continues to conduct career exposure programs for high school students who are visually impaired or legally blind. These programs include opportunities to interact with former recipients of vocational rehabilitation services who are successfully employed in a variety of careers. Some of these programs are held on college campuses, where the students gain a firsthand perspective of campus life in addition to gaining insight into a variety of careers that former clients are now engaged in.

BESB VR staff members continue to participate in and present information at in-service training programs organized by BESB for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are blind or visually impaired. The Children's Services Program of BESB provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff to learn about low vision aids, adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded

core curriculum activities and resources that are available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB.

BESB VR has also established a goal of participating in Planning and Placement Team meetings early in the transition process to identify the need for supported employment services, and to identify providers, both private and public, that may offer services while a student is preparing to transition from public or private education into employment. BESB VR Counselors are also available to provide vocational counseling and coordinate trial work opportunities for students who are considering sub-minimum wage placement options, to ensure that these individuals are fully aware of the opportunities for success in the competitive labor market, with supports, if applicable.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

BESB VR Update: Other than providing training to staff of community rehabilitation programs on blindness related technology and adaptations for accessing training and employment, no needs to establish, develop or improve upon these programs have been identified.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

BESB VR Update: WIOA provided new opportunities for collaboration, coordination and participation of partners, with a shared goal and vision of connecting job seekers with relevant training and employment. Through these partnerships, BESB VR Counselors are now part of regional business services teams meeting regularly to discuss current employer needs within their regions, and to identify upcoming employment opportunities and skill requirements to be considered as a qualified candidate for these positions. Through the execution of Memorandums of Understanding and accompanying Infrastructure Agreements, the VR Counselors are co-located on a part-time basis at the American Job Centers, encouraging clients to register for applicable services available through partner programs. Rehabilitation Technologists offer technical assistance on approaches to increase accessibility of the American Job Centers and partner services.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

BESB VR Update: BESB VR staff's expertise in blindness related topics, including how adaptive technology can be utilized to make core services of the American Job Centers and training programs accessible, is offered to the partner programs. The Rehabilitation Technologists review testing and training materials, equipment and structural design at the American Job Centers, offering recommendations on how to make information and training materials accessible to job seekers who are blind. Additionally, BESB VR Counselors provide in-service training to staff of partner programs on effective approaches to utilize when working with and assisting individuals who are blind. BESB VR staff are an active and ongoing resource to partner program staff in this area.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

BESB VR Update: Providing clients with the skills and training necessary to qualify for occupations that exist in the economy is essential. With diminishing financial resources, partnering with other components of the workforce system is a key factor to achieving this goal. Being a part of regional business services teams ensures that BESB VR Counselors are at the forefront of discussions with employers who are seeking to fill job vacancies as well as those employers who are considering expansion in this state. Dedicating staff resources to offer training to clients in the use of Career Index Plus is an important strategy employed by BESB VR to encourage clients to take a more immersive role in the career exploration and job seeking process. Career Index Plus is accessible to individuals that utilize adaptive technology. It contains a vocational interest inventory, economic forecasting by career cluster, and direct links to job openings by region, state

and zip code. For BESB VR to be effective in bringing together qualified job seekers with employers, all of these approaches must be utilized to the greatest extent possible. BESB VR further recognizes the need for greater utilization of supported employment funding to increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals with multiple, significant impediments to employment. With the opportunity to utilize a portion of these funds to support youth with disabilities in extended services, this employment option will be stressed at PPT meetings to expand awareness of this approach to employment.

Greater utilization and awareness of adaptive technology has also been identified as a priority to ensure that clients have the tools and training necessary to participate fully in vocational training opportunities and in employment. New goals developed within this plan include tutorials and guides to assist clients with self-directed training to augment the training services offered by BESB VR.

A coordinated approach to expand the ability of partner programs and community-based organizations to communicate the availability of BESB VR services is an equally important strategy to achieve the overarching goal of employment for clients.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

BESB VR Update: Offering a robust approach to career information and job openings is a key component of the Innovation and Expansion activities that have been established as priorities for BESB VR. In addition to using Career Index Plus as a tool, BESB VR provides access to the National Federation of the Blind's (NFB) Newsline service to provide a lower-tech option through touch tone telephones for clients who may not have internet access or current skills in the use of computers. NFB Newsline also offers a web-based option for clients who have access to the internet.

Programs serving youth, including youth from underserved populations, is another priority that has been identified in the Innovation and Expansion initiatives for BESB VR. VR staff assists in the development of independent living, leadership and career exposure programs and initiatives. The SRC and BESB VR offer co-sponsorship to the Youth Leadership Forum, a proven model for developing leadership skills and community involvement for youth with disabilities.

Expansion of the availability of adaptive technology in training programs, core services, and apprenticeship programs is another category where there is considerable activity. BESB VR staff brings their knowledge of blindness related technology accommodations into discussions with the partners so that solutions can be identified and implemented in the planning stages of new initiatives, ensuring equal access to services. BESB VR also provides support for the adaptive technology laboratory located at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind, making it possible for clients of BESB located in that region to receive local training in the use of adaptive technology.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

BESB VR Update: Ensuring that clients from BESB VR have access to accessible training materials from the onset is essential. Remedial provision of such information places the client at a disadvantage and jeopardizes full participation and inclusion in the training program. With institutions of higher education, BESB VR strives to obtain coursework syllabi in advance of the semester to assist with assessing what textbooks can be obtained in web-based or other accessible formats. Where materials need to be converted into Braille, close collaboration with the university or training program's Disability Services Coordinator is critical to ensure that accessible materials are ready for the client on the first day of instruction.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

**A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS
BESB VR Update:**

Overarching Goals:

Promote Business Growth: Connecticut businesses in key sectors (economic drivers) must have the skilled, talented employees needed to compete effectively, prosper, and create jobs for CT workers.

Strengthen Current Workforce: Workers must have the skills and credentials needed to prosper and advance in careers that support their families.

Develop Future Talent: Connecticut youth must be prepared and ready for career and post-secondary success as productive contributors to a competitive state economy.

System Transformation: Connecticut's multi-faceted workforce system must align and integrate goals, strategies, policies, investments, services, infrastructure, and accountability.

Objective 1. Analyze economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Strategy: Identify employment needs of employers - knowledge, skills, abilities in key industries and occupations.

Measure: Documentation of coordination with CTDOL, Office of Research to obtain data and information.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. Through ongoing collaboration with the Department of Labor's Office of Research, a significant amount of economic and occupational outlook data is made available to the BESB VR Counselors, all of whom receive monthly updates on labor market information. The VR Counselors have also participated in training conferences that included presentations on the current labor market and an analysis of the trends looking into the future. Labor market information is also readily available for staff and clients to access at <http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/index.asp>. Through this website, BESB VR Counselors and clients can review occupations in demand, use a searchable employer database, review education and training programs, re-employment initiatives and the Connecticut Career Resources Network. The information can be narrowed in search criteria to focus on specific regions within the state.

Strategy: Analysis of current workforce unemployment data, labor market trends, workforce's educational and skill levels (including individuals with barriers/disabilities).

Measure: Documentation of coordination with CTDOL, Office of Research to obtain data and information.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. From information provided by the CTDOL, Office of Research, as of September, 2019, the unemployment rate in Connecticut was at 3.6%. Economic projections reflect significant growth in statisticians (up 36.5%), Home Health Aides (up 34%), CNC Machinists (up 33.5%), Research Analysts (up 29.6%), Software Developers (up 29.3%), Mechanical Drafters (up 28.9%), Nurse Practitioners (up 28.6%), and Physician's Assistants (up 28.4%) by 2026. In total, there are 19 occupations that project increases in growth by more than 20% by 2026.

Strategy: Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, capacity) of CT's workforce development activities (including education and training), to address identified education/skill needs and employment needs of employers.

Measure: Coordination with CTDOL, Office of Research to obtain data and information.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR staff continue to actively participate in meetings on both a statewide and regional basis to identify strategies to prepare program participants for the employment opportunities that exist and that will be available into the future. One particular strategy in use at BESB VR is the strong focus on engaging clients to utilize Career Index Plus as a tool for conducting self-directed research that is individualized to their unique circumstances and interests.

Objective 2. Implement strategies for workforce partners to prepare educated/skilled workforce.

Strategy: Establish performance accountability measures and align strategies across the workforce programs to support economic growth and self-sufficiency, and how Connecticut will assess workforce system effectiveness.

Measure: Performance measures established with each partner program's anticipated contribution to the measures noted.

BESB VR Update: This objective is in progress. Performance accountability measures are being established under this new state plan.

Objective 3. Operationalize the Service Delivery System

Strategy: Review statewide policies, programs, and recommended actions to support comprehensive streamlined workforce system.

Measure: BESB VR provides policies to workforce partners for review.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The policies for BESB VR have been updated to reflect changes brought about by WIOA and the policies have been made available to the partner programs. Through collaborative meetings amongst the partners, opportunities to discuss and review how BESB VR policies apply to specific client situations have made it possible for each partner to leverage services available from the other partner programs to make the best use of available funding for the provision of vocational training opportunities. The policies may be viewed on the agency website at <https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability> or by selecting this link: BESB VR Policy Manual.

Strategy: Develop/continuously improve workforce system: identify coordination/alignment barriers (avoid duplication); develop career pathways strategies; develop outreach/access strategies for individuals and employers; develop/expand industry/sector partnership strategies; identify regions/designate local areas; develop One-Stop system continuous improvement strategy; develop staff training strategies.

Measure: BESB VR staff participates in regional and statewide workforce meetings that focus on implementation of a coordinated One-Stop service delivery system.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. This strategy is in full operation with BESB VR Counselors participating in regional business service teams, and designated staff also participating in statewide, interagency team meetings. BESB VR Counselors are co-located on a part-time basis at the primary American Job Centers in their assigned territories, arranging for clients to register for services available through partner programs where applicable.

Strategy: Develop and update comprehensive State performance accountability measures.

Measure: BESB VR provides data on performance in identified accountability categories.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR provides data on employer engagement to CT DOL for inclusion into the statewide reporting on that measurement.

In Program Year 2018, BESB VR engaged 112 employers to address their recruitment and employee retention needs.

Strategy: Identify/disseminate info on best practices for: effective operation of One-Stop centers; development of effective local boards; effective training programs responsive to real-time labor market analysis.

Measure: BESB VR provides to the state and regional workforce system evidence-based practice on successful job placement and retention strategies for individuals with significant disabilities.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR has provided technical assistance and recommendations pertaining to accessibility of American Job Centers and training program services. This has included reviewing training materials in use and recommending methods to remediate documents that were not originally created in accessible formats. Through this partnership, job seeking skills class materials are now

available in electronic, accessible formats. BESB VR Rehabilitation Technologists have also assisted in the review of computer hardware and software in use at the American Job Centers, providing recommendations for updates and computer settings to optimize accessibility features. BESB VR Counselors regularly meet with staff of the American Job Centers to discuss individual placement strategies, the availability of on-the-job training and internship funding and the wide array of supports that BESB VR can provide to employers to bring about successful job placements.

Strategy: Develop and review statewide policies to coordinate services through One-Stop system: criteria and procedures for Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to assess effectiveness and continuous improvement; guidance to allocate One-Stop center infrastructure funds; policies on roles/contributions of One-Stop partners.

Measure: Documentation of BESB VR staff participation in the review and development of coordination of services to people with significant disabilities with One-Stop center staff and partners.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR staff were members of the teams that reviewed and completed certification of the American Job Centers, offering recommendations for accessibility enhancements, where applicable.

Strategy: Develop strategies for technological improvements to One-Stop system to: enhance digital literacy skills; accelerate acquisition of skills and credentials; strengthen staff professional development; ensure accessibility of technology.

Measure: Documentation of BESB VR adaptive technology consultations and recommendations for equipment to make the One-Stop Centers accessible to individuals with significant disabilities.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. Recognizing the ongoing nature of this objective as new training and employment opportunities become available, BESB VR staff have continued to offer accessibility consultations, offering low tech and where necessary, extensive adaptive technology solutions. Rehabilitation Technologists are available to support BESB VR Counselors and partner program staff in assessing job opportunities to determine the types of adaptations that would be typically needed, recognizing that an individualized assessment for specific job candidates is necessary to finalize the recommendations that are beneficial for each candidate's placement success.

Strategy: Develop strategies to align technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs.

Measure: Documentation of BESB VR staff participation in statewide meeting regarding the development of a common-front end data collection system.

BESB VR Update: This objective was not achieved. There are no imminent plans for a shared data collection system across the partner programs, although discussions of the merits of such a "common-front end" data collection system for the partner agencies has continued. The uniqueness of each of the partner's current data collection software and the cost that would be incurred across the programs to develop such a universal data collection system has been a barrier to progress.

Strategy: Develop allocation formulas to distribute funds to local areas for adult and youth programs.

Measure: Documentation of BESB VR staff participation in cost allocation formula reviews that follow prescribed federal requirements.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. Cost allocation formulas were finalized and are in use relative to co-location of BESB VR Counselors at the American Job Centers.

Strategy: Prepare annual performance reports.

Measure: BESB VR report on performance measures distributed.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. In Program Year 2018, BESB VR served 766 individuals under an IPE. There were 102 individuals whom achieved an employment outcome. The average hourly earnings for these individuals was \$19.95. BESB VR has also provided performance data for inclusion in the Department's report of activities and measures achieved. This document for the agency provides information on program

performance for Federal Fiscal Year 2019, and it may be viewed at:

<http://portal.ct.gov/das/Lists/Publications/Reports/Digest-of-Administrative-Reports>. Among the notable findings, BESB VR served 804 clients in Federal Fiscal Year 2019. Of these, 782 were served under an individualized employment plan and 86 clients achieved employment. The average hourly wages for these consumers were \$23.48. Through the Randolph-Sheppard Program, gross sales from the vending facilities reached \$5.1 million. There were 31 vending facility operators, who employed an additional 79 workers. Average annual income for the vending facility operators was \$41,410, with five of the locations providing income of more than \$80,000.

Strategy: Develop statewide workforce and labor market information system.

Measure: BESB VR staff provides data on job placements for clients served by the program.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR data on services and outcomes is available to partner programs for use in aggregate reporting.

Strategy: Develop other policies to promote statewide objectives and enhance system performance.

Measure: Documentation of BESB VR participation in the development of state policies and objectives.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR has actively participated in the interagency workgroup that set an objective of designing a reference guide on partner program services to share with employers and community-based organizations in the state. The workgroup further developed and delivered two business services conferences in Program Years 2017 and 2018 that brought partner program staff together to learn about best practices, employer perspectives, emerging occupations, and apprenticeship opportunities.

Strategy: Alignment of funded activities.

Measure: BESB VR clients gain access to core services offered by the One-Stop Centers with information provided in accessible formats by the centers.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR clients have actively engaged in services offered by the American Job Centers with 104 clients enrolled in core services.

Strategy: Alignment with activities not covered by Plan, to assure coordination, avoid duplication.

Measure: Independent Living services are offered and provided to eligible individuals with disabilities who are being served by the One-Stop centers.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The Adult Services Program provides independent living training through orientation and mobility instructors and rehabilitation teachers to BESB VR clients whose Individualized Plans for Employment identify the need for these services as a component to achieve an employment outcome. In Program Year 2018, 59 clients received these disability related skills training services from the Adult Services staff.

Strategy: Coordination of activities, comprehensive services, including support services.

Measure: BESB VR staff members participate in regional and statewide planning and implementation meetings to coordinate the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible clients served by the One-Stop delivery system.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. Through part-time co-location at the American Job Centers, BESB VR Counselors had an onsite presence at the centers 135 times during Program Year 2018, meeting with 115 clients at the centers. Additionally, BESB VR Counselors participated in 29 Business Services team meetings during that time period. BESB VR Counselors directly facilitated the registration of 27 clients in partner services during these onsite meetings.

Strategy: Engagement with community colleges, career/technical schools, to leverage resources.

Measure: BESB VR staff becomes participating members in regional teams that develop certificate and training programs at community colleges and career/technical schools to ensure curriculum accessibility for individuals with significant disabilities.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR staff have been actively engaged with representatives from the State College and University System to discuss how course curriculum can be made accessible. The BESB VR Rehabilitation Technologists have assisted with reviewing website design and electronic media for coursework completion, making recommendations on approaches that will increase access and accessibility. BESB VR staff have also participated in meetings and tours of certificate and training programs at the community colleges, such as the dental assistant program at Tunxis Community College, as well as working with private institutions of post-secondary education such as the Connecticut Center for Massage Therapy to increase the accessibility of their curriculums.

In addition to the participation of BESB VR in contributing to the aforementioned comprehensive statewide goals for the Workforce system, the following, goals, objectives, strategies and measures specific to BESB VR were developed with the full participation and guidance of the SRC.

Goal A: Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals of BESB VR.

Objective: BESB will collaborate with BRS and at least one major employer with a statewide presence to implement a Disability Resource Team to assist the employer with job recruitment and retention services.

Strategy: BESB Job Developer will coordinate with BRS Job Development Team to identify and work with employer(s) to implement a Resource Team.

Measure: Team is developed and implements resource meetings with employer(s).

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The VR Counselor Coordinator serves as the point of contact with the BRS Job Development Team and regularly attends their monthly meetings. BRS and BESB continue to collaborate by sharing job leads. BRS and BESB have partnered with a company from Israel, Project Ray, LLC to provide job candidates. Additional collaborations have included meeting with staff from the Lowes Distribution Center to identify jobs that would be accessible for individuals that utilize screen reading adaptations, Advance Auto Distribution Center in Enfield, and Cartus, Inc. in Danbury.

Objective: BESB VR Counselors join job development teams implemented through the regional workforce boards to gain access to employers within the regions who are seeking job candidates.

Strategy: Counselors contact the Job Developers of the regional One-Stop Center to become part of their employer outreach teams.

Measure: Each counselor serves as part of a regional job development team.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. In Program Year 2018, BESB VR Counselors participated in 29 business services team meetings across the 5 workforce regions. Through these collaborations, clients have obtained interviews, gained access to an apprenticeship opportunity, and two job hires have resulted.

Objective: BESB VR clients obtain proficiency to utilize web-based job search websites.

Strategy: Rehabilitation teachers and/or fee for service vendors teach no less than ten job seeking clients per year how to navigate and utilize at least one job search website on the internet.

Measure: Documentation of utilization by each client.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. Through VR Counselor referrals, 89 clients have access to Career Index Plus. The Rehabilitation Teacher remains involved as a technical assistance resource and trainer for all of the clients who request assistance in utilizing this web-based job search and career exploration tool.

Objective: Each BESB VR Counselor with job development responsibilities shall engage clients on their caseloads in job fair attendance.

Strategy: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will share information on job fairs within their regions with job seeking clients on their individual caseloads and facilitate the attendance of clients at job fairs.

Measure: Documentation of no less than five clients per Counselor caseload per year attending a job fair.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. In total, 58 clients of the BESB VR Program attended at least one job fair, with 13 clients attending more than one job fair. All of the VR Counselors with full-time regional caseload responsibilities for the entire program year had at least 5 clients from their caseload attend job fairs.

Goal B: Provide coordinated services to students with disabilities to prepare for careers and post-secondary education after exit from high school.

Objective: BESB VR shall designate two full-time Counselors to exclusively serve clients that are in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) category.

Strategy: Middle school and high school clients will be assigned to one of the counselor caseloads to receive specific, qualifying Pre-ETS services with dedicated Pre-ETS funding.

Measure: Documentation of caseload assignments.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. There are two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors assigned to serve clients who are students with disabilities, providing Pre-Employment Transition Services. Case assignments are made based on geographical location, with each Counselor covering half of the state.

Objective: Pre-ETS eligible students and their parents/guardians shall receive a resource guide that explains all of the BESB VR services that can be provided to prepare for careers and post-secondary education.

Strategy: BESB VR shall develop a transition resource guide to post on the BESB section of the agency website and to distribute to Pre-ETS eligible clients and their parents/guardians in their preferred format.

Measure: Case record documentation that the resource guide has been mailed or delivered to each Pre-ETS eligible client and their parents/guardians.

BESB VR Update: This objective was partially achieved. The resource guide has been completed but was put into use subsequent to the completion of Program Year 2018.

Objective: Pre-ETS eligible clients are provided timely notice of opportunities from the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and/or the Transition Coordinator to participate in work exposure programs, paid employment, internships, college preparatory programs, technology training programs, life skills programs and related career development camps, seminars and initiatives, both in state and out of state.

Strategy: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the Transition Coordinator working with the Pre-ETS clients provide timely information on available services and programs so that clients and their guardians can make informed decisions on attendance at programs, activities, and related transition experiences of interest.

Measure: Case record documentation of the services being authorized.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The Transition Coordinator provides information to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on programs and initiatives for transition-age youth with a focus on Pre-Employment Transition Services. For Program Year 2018, this resulted in 66 opportunities that included paid work and internship experiences, independent living residential programs, mentoring experiences, youth leadership camp, and college tours.

Objective: BESB VR develops and implements outreach and public education programs for potentially Pre-ETS eligible clients and their parents/guardians.

Strategy: BESB VR Transition Coordinator designs and delivers outreach and public education programs to populations where Pre-ETS eligible clients are likely to be found, such as, but not limited to school districts.

Measure: Documentation of the programs being provided.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. BESB VR works with several transition-related groups, focusing on outreach and public education for families about Pre-ETS

opportunities and initiatives. These groups include the Transition Task Force, the Pre-ETS program for the General VR agency, Community of Practice, the five Regional Education Service Centers, as well as the American Job Centers and the workforce boards. These collaborations yielded events such as the Transition Symposium, the CT Youth Leadership Forum, multiple Regional Transition Expos, an Adaptive Technology Conference, Disability Mentoring Day, and participation at job fairs. Many of these groups work diligently and collaboratively on updating educational materials for families as well as school district staff, specific to Pre-ETS related activities and opportunities for successful transition from school to work or post-secondary education.

Objective: BESB VR and the SRC co-sponsor leadership development activities and camps for groups of Pre-ETS eligible clients.

Strategy: The SRC and BESB VR provide co-sponsorship funding for the Youth Leadership Forum, and similar programs if available.

Measure: Documentation of the funds committed.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The SRC has continued its ongoing co-sponsorship of the Youth Leadership Forum annually.

Goal C: Utilize Innovation and Expansion authority to engage in continuous improvement initiatives, to increase access to services and activities that can benefit groups of individuals with visual impairment or legal blindness, to increase access to career information, adaptive technology, self-advocacy, and public awareness of the employment potential of individuals served by BESB VR.

Objective: BESB VR shall provide funding for electronic access to career and news information.

Strategy: Funding provided to have NFB Newsline available to BESB VR clients.

Measure: Documentation of purchase order for NFB Newsline.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. In partnership with the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut, BESB VR has sponsored NFB's Newsline so that clients can access this important service. This service was extensively utilized in Program Year 2018 with more than 320,000 minutes of phone utilization and 87,000 downloads to Victor Stream players.

Objective: Provide access to the latest adaptive technology devices for clients to try out for assessment purposes.

Strategy: Purchase new adaptive technology devices for the BESB Technology Lab and the Technology Lab at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind.

Measure: Documentation of purchase order for technology devices.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. Adaptive technology updates have included an adapted keyboard, talking graph calculator, Zoomtext Fusion, Typing Tutor, and an UltraMag portable magnifier, in order to offer a wide array of adaptive devices and software for evaluations and demonstrations at the labs in Windsor and New London.

Objective: The SRC utilizes an entity experienced in administering consumer satisfaction surveys to conduct the fiscal year 2016 Consumer Satisfaction Survey and the results are used to develop continuous improvement initiatives.

Strategy: The SRC selects a vendor, reviews the results of the survey, and works with Program staff to implement strategies that address the results and trends identified in the survey.

Measure: Documentation of purchase of survey, Consumer Satisfaction Report received and reviewed with Program staff.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University was selected to conduct the Consumer Satisfaction Survey and to analyze the data in comparison to prior years.

Results of the survey were utilized to identify areas that needed attention (i.e. transportation and business plan development). In conjunction with BESB VR, strategies for improvement in both areas were identified and implemented. CPPSR was also utilized

for the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys that were conducted in Program Years 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Objective: SRC representatives participate in state, regional, and national conferences and programs that provide opportunities to increase public awareness of the employment capabilities of BESB VR clients, increase the SRC members knowledge and understanding of the public VR Program, and create opportunities for learning best practices that can develop into new goals and strategies for BESB VR to explore and implement, if applicable.

Strategy: The SRC Chair is provided with information about upcoming conferences, seminars, and activities from the BESB Director and designates an SRC member or members to participate and share information with the full membership.

Measure: SRC members attend CSAVR, NCSAB and other national, regional, or statewide conferences or seminars that address the components stated in the objective.

BESB VR Update: This objective was achieved. The Chair of the SRC attended the spring, 2018 conferences of CSAVR and NCSAB.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

BESB VR Update: Prior to receipt of the most recent reallocation award in September, 2019, diminishing financial resources significantly impacted BESB VR, requiring a reduction in staffing levels as vacancies occurred, and updating policies to implement cost containment strategies. The SRC has worked in collaboration with BESB VR to implement these strategies to reduce administrative and purchased service costs with a goal of continuing to serve all eligible individuals in future years within available funding. With the addition of \$1.4 million through the recent reallocation award, BESB VR is looking toward the future for increased innovation and expansion initiatives that will identify potential candidates for VR services through focused outreach and that will also generate increased opportunities for employment of the clients that are served.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS
BESB VR Update: With 23 clients of BESB VR eligible for supported employment services, 8 of whom meet the criteria for the definition of "youth with a disability," BESB VR is achieving its goal of identifying situations where supported employment services are beneficial. In particular, by participating in Planning and Placement Team meetings, it allows for opportunities to discuss and consider this option for employment at the earliest stages of the transition process. This participation by BESB VR Counselors expands discussions beyond day program placements in some situations to instead focusing on how the model of supported employment can enable students to achieve competitive and integrated employment.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

BESB VR Update: With the narrow allowances for the use of supported employment funds, utilization rates are lower than desired. The requirement that states must expend the matching fund requirement for the placement of a youth with a disability into supported employment in order to carry forward the unobligated portions of both the youth and the adult portions of the grant award have hampered the availability of these funds. BESB VR is working to identify strategies that tap into the Title I funds for trial work opportunities and other services that can best prepare individuals for job placement success.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

BESB VR Update: BESB VR is participating in discussions on the implementation of performance measures with the other partners in the workforce system and these

accountability measures will be reported upon once established. BESB VR assisted 102 individuals to achieve employment outcomes in Program Year 2018. The average hourly earnings for these individuals was \$19.95 per hour.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

BESB VR Update: During Program Year 2018, Innovation and Expansion funding was utilized to cover the cost of the NFB Newline service. Innovation and Expansion funds were also utilized to cover the cost of the SRC's co-sponsorship of the Youth Leadership Forum. BESB VR was a separate co-sponsor of this leadership development camp on a college campus for transition-age students.

Innovation and Expansion funding was utilized to secure the Center for Public Policy and Social Research to conduct and analyze the 2018 consumer satisfaction survey and to report their findings to the SRC for use in developing Program goals and priorities. Funding was also utilized to facilitate the participation of the SRC, through its Chair, to attend national activities at the conferences of the NCSAB and CSAVR.

Innovation and Expansion funds were utilized to update two adaptive technology laboratories with the provision of hardware and software to enable clients and groups of eligible individuals to have opportunities to try out devices and to obtain training and adaptive technology evaluations.

Thus far in Program Year 2019, Innovation and Expansion Funds have been utilized for the continuation of the NFB Newline service, for conducting of the consumer satisfaction survey by the Center for Public Policy and Social Research, and also for membership in the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind to ensure timely access by the SRC membership and BESB VR to information on best practices, service trends and matters of relevance and importance to the field of blindness rehabilitation.

Looking forward to the remainder of Program Year 2019 and into Program Year 2020, BESB VR will be exploring new adaptive technology products and devices that can be obtained for evaluations and demonstration purposes for clients, as well as for demonstrations to employers and community partners. The NFB Newline service is also anticipated to continue in Program Year 2020 as well as the conducting of the consumer satisfaction survey to assist BESB VR and the SRC with developing continuous improvement strategies.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

BESB VR Update: Supported employment services refer to competitive integrated employment, including customized employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, including a youth with a most significant disability, is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment that is individualized and customized. These services are provided in a manner that is consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual. Supported employment services are available for individuals for whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred, or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition from support provided by the Bureau, in order to perform this work.

An individual with a most significant disability, whose supported employment in an integrated setting does not satisfy the criteria of competitive integrated employment, is considered to be working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment so long as the individual can reasonably anticipate achieving competitive integrated employment within six months of achieving a supported employment

outcome. In limited circumstances, a period not to exceed 12 months from the achievement of the supported employment outcome is permissible if a longer period is necessary based on the needs of the individual and the individual has demonstrated progress toward competitive earnings based on information contained in the service record. The six-month short-term basis period, and the additional six months that may be available in limited circumstances, begins after an individual has completed up to 24 months of supported employment services (unless a longer period of time is necessary based upon the individual's needs) and the individual has achieved a supported employment outcome. The job placement of the individual must be stable for a minimum period of 90 days following the transition to extended services. At this point, the individual has achieved a supported employment outcome.

Ongoing support services, including customized employment, and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain the client in supported employment are organized and made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist the client to achieve competitive integrated employment, and these services:

(A) Are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an Individualized Plan for Employment;

(B) Are provided by the Bureau for a period of time not to exceed 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment; and

(C) Following transition, as Post-Employment services that are unavailable from an extended services provider and that are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment.

Supported employment services are initiated once the individual is hired and has started to work at the actual job site for the employer. Title 6B Supported Employment funds can only be utilized for this specific service or for extended services for youth with disabilities placed into supported employment. All other services as planned for and detailed in the IPE, including job placement services, can only be paid for using basic Vocational Rehabilitation Title I funds, state matching funds, or program income funds. The most frequent type of supported employment service is job coaching, although on-site evaluators and similar services that provide direct support to the individual at the job site may also be considered for funding through the Title 6B funds.

An Individualized Plan for Employment for an individual with a most significant disability, for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate, must—

1. Specify the supported employment services to be provided by the Bureau;
2. Specify the expected extended services needed by the eligible individual, which may include natural supports;
3. Identify the source of extended services, or to the extent that the source of the extended services cannot be identified at the time of the development of the IPE, include a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that such a source will become available;
4. Provide for periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the Individualized Plan for Employment by the time of transition to extended services;
5. Provide for the coordination of services provided under an Individualized Plan for Employment with services provided under other individualized plans established under other Federal or State programs;
6. To the extent that job skills training is provided, identify that the training will be provided on site; and
7. Include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities,

capabilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

Extended services refer to ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment. Extended services can be made available singly, or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual in maintaining supported employment. The services are customized and based on the needs of the eligible individual, as specified in their Individualized Plan for Employment. Extended services may be provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from supported employment provided by the Bureau. Transition to extended services occurs once the individual has received up to 24 months of supported employment services or the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the individual have determined that an extension of time to provide supported employment services beyond 24 months is necessary to support and maintain the individual in supported employment before the individual transitions to extended services.

For a youth with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, the Bureau may directly provide or fund extended services for a period not to exceed four years or at such time that a youth reaches age 25, whichever occurs first. The Bureau cannot provide extended services to an individual with a most significant disability who is not a youth with a most significant disability.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Department of Aging and Disability Services, Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation Program

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Department of Aging and Disability Services

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Brian S. Sigman

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Director of Education and Rehabilitation, BESB

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Brian S. Sigman
Title of Signatory	Director of Education and Rehabilitation, BESB
Date Signed	February 27, 2020

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all	

The State Plan must include	Include
applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	29.0	37.0	32.0	42.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX OTHER APPENDICES

There are no additional appendices.